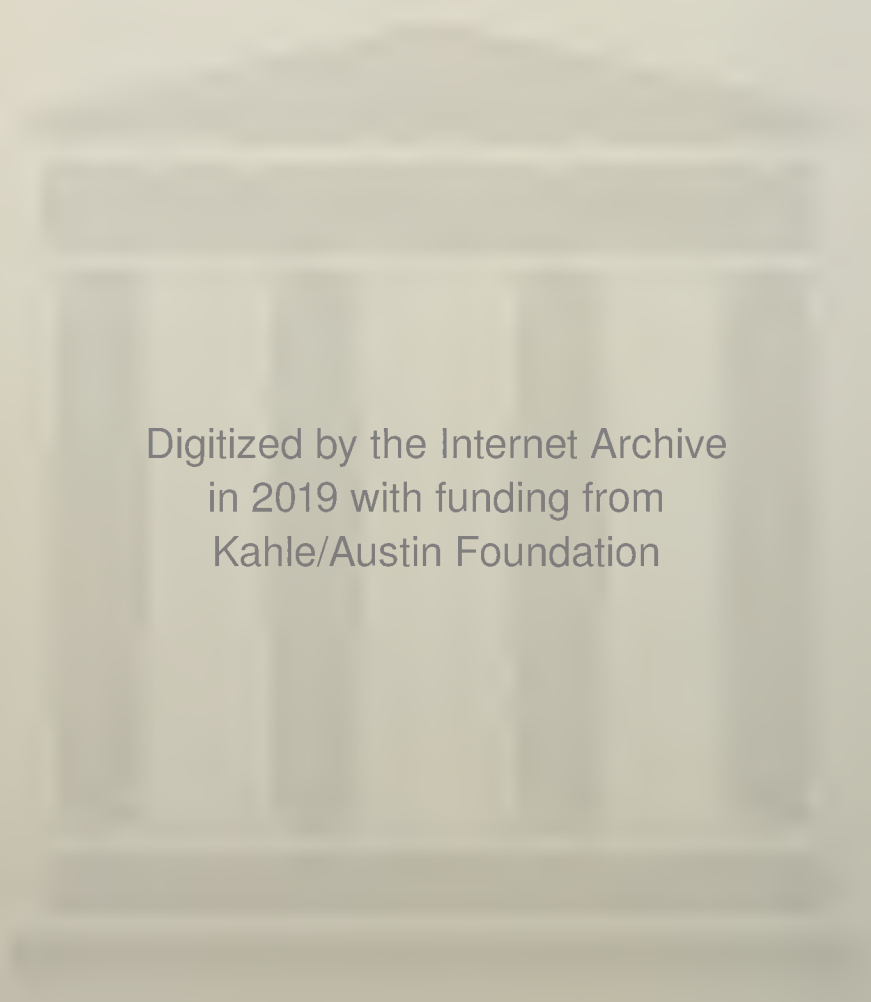


WORKERS *or* CITIZENS

DEMOCRACY AND IDENTITY
IN ROSARIO, ARGENTINA
(1912-1930)



MATTHEW B. KARUSH



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MATTHEW B. KARUSH

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Contents

Map, Illustration, and Tables / v

Acknowledgments / vii

Introduction / 1

CHAPTER ONE	Visions of a Nonpluralist Democracy: The Discursive Construction of a Unified Argentine Nation / 15
CHAPTER TWO	The Limits of Social Mobility: Workers and Politicians in Rosario, 1912–1930 / 43
CHAPTER THREE	Appealing to Workers: <i>Criollista</i> Nationalism and Class Conflict, 1912–1913 / 62
CHAPTER FOUR	Partisanship, <i>Caudillismo</i> , and the Threat of Class Politics, 1913–1916 / 90
CHAPTER FIVE	Class Before Country: Labor Unrest and the Delegitimation of Democracy, 1917–1923 / 119
CHAPTER SIX	The Persistence of Class in the Last Days of Democracy, 1923–1930 / 155
	Conclusion / 196
	Notes / 211
	Primary Sources / 251
	Index / 255
	About the Book and the Author / 264

Map, Illustration, and Tables

MAP

Map 1. Rosario, 1921: Neighborhoods and Electoral Districts / 42

ILLUSTRATION

Figure 1. Major political parties: Santa Fe Province, 1912–1930 / 104

TABLES

Table 1. Elite Club Membership Among Rosario Politicians, 1912–1930 / 51
Table 2. Provincial Election Results in the Department of Rosario, 1914 and 1916 / 113
Table 3. Provincial Election Results in the Department of Rosario, 1916 and 1918 / 125
Table 4. Provincial Election Results in the Department of Rosario, 1918 and 1920 / 135
Table 5. Provincial Election Results in the Department of Rosario, 1924 and 1926 / 178

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Introduction

During the Argentine summer of 1912, two stories dominated the news in the major port city of Rosario. In January, local railroad workers joined a national strike, demanding higher wages and improved work conditions. Since the conflict interrupted the movement of goods to market during the height of the harvest season, it drew the rapt attention of a nervous elite.¹ Meanwhile, Rosario was also the site of a major political experiment. On 31 March, voters in Santa Fe Province would elect a new governor and vice governor. This election would be the first to conform, at least in part, to the prescriptions of the Sáenz Peña Law, a package of electoral reforms that guaranteed universal male suffrage. Santa Fe was to be the testing ground for Argentina's fledgling democracy, and Rosario, the province's economic heart and dominant population center, witnessed unprecedented levels of political activity.

The inauguration of electoral democracy gave the railroad strike a potential political significance. Even though the new provisions establishing compulsory voting and the secret ballot were not yet in force, Santa Fe's "intervention" government, imposed by President Sáenz Peña in 1911, would ensure that the 1912 election was the cleanest in Argentine history. More important, the application of new voter rolls based on military conscription lists produced a significant expansion of the electorate. In Rosario, these measures resulted in a turnout over three times the size of the one generated by the previous year's election.² And many of these new voters were workers. Although the citizenship requirement left large numbers of foreign-born workers disenfranchised, the sons of immigrants, as well as others born in Argentina, represented an ample new electorate within the working class. As a result, many of the railroad workers walking the picket lines in January and February would be exercising their political rights at the ballot box in March.

Surprisingly, though, the newspaper reporters who covered these stories treated them as completely unrelated events. For nearly two months, the railroad strike joined the political campaign on the front pages of *La Capital*, the preferred newspaper of Rosario's commercial elite. Yet not one article suggested that the outcome of the strike might affect the political choices made by enfranchised workers, or that the competing

parties might have different attitudes toward the demands of organized labor. In fact, in its articles on labor conflict and electoral politics, *La Capital* applied two distinct, even contradictory sets of analytical categories. The newspaper interpreted the railroad strike as an example of class conflict, an inevitable byproduct of capitalist modernization. As one editorial put it, "The conflicts of capital and labor occur everywhere and are a characteristic phenomenon of the development of nations."³ Moreover, *La Capital* repeatedly identified the strikers as members of the working class, referring to them with the words "*obreros*" and "*trabajadores*." But when the paper turned its attention to politics, this class terminology disappeared, as did the very notion of class divisions. Reporters and editors described the campaign as a competition for the support of *los ciudadanos* (the citizens) or, even more typically, *el pueblo* (the people). Their political analyses referred to "public opinion" and to "popular" parties but never to social class.⁴ With the establishment of compulsory and secret voting, *La Capital* argued,

Each Argentine citizen will be a true active will. . . . Abstention and indifference will thus disappear from the Argentine political scene, and the collective soul, conscious of its force and of its right, will have revitalized itself with the exercise of that sacred right transformed into unavoidable duty.⁵

By this account, the process of voting would awaken the "collective soul" of the Argentine masses, destroying their apathy and making them aware of their common interests. *La Capital's* editors recognized that workers' economic interests placed them in conflict with the owners of capital, and yet they seemed to assume that democratic electoral politics would remain apart from, and untainted by, these competing interests and conflicts.

La Capital's double vision brings into sharp relief several issues that lie at the heart of Argentine political history. The newspaper's coverage of the campaign reflected the particular understanding of democracy that dominated Argentine political discourse at the time. This version of democracy had its roots in nineteenth-century liberalism but was reinforced by the particular circumstances in which political elites undertook electoral reform. As this book will argue, elite Argentine politicians turned to democracy in response to a crisis of national identity brought on by massive immigration and violent class conflict. With millions of Italian and Spanish immigrants flooding into the country after 1880 and swelling the ranks of the labor movement, elites became convinced that only a more unified and harmonious nation could solidify the social order and their privileged place in it. Toward this end, they adopted a democratic discourse intended to efface working-class identity and replace it with a class-neutral form of citizenship. As a result, the model of electoral

democracy embraced by Argentine elites was decidedly nonpluralist; it allowed no space for the legitimate political representation of working-class interests. Viewing democracy as an instrument of nation building, politicians hoped to transform class-conscious workers into virtuous citizens intent on pursuing the common good. It was *La Capital's* commitment to this nonpluralist form of democracy that prevented the paper from appreciating the potential political significance of the railroad strike.

Equally important, though, *La Capital's* coverage reveals that class-neutral, Argentine citizenship was not the only political identity available to workers in this period. Since the 1890s, the cities of the Argentine littoral—particularly Buenos Aires and Rosario—had seen the emergence of a combative and well-organized labor movement led by anarchists. Even if many Rosarino workers had not yet participated in these labor unions, most had been exposed to the discourse of working-class interest. Moreover, the realities of workers' lives—where they lived, how they worked—lent a certain plausibility to the idea of class divisions. In this context, the electoral reform of 1912 inaugurated a protracted struggle over the political identity of Rosario's working-class citizens. In order to win elections, politicians needed to pursue voters who often identified themselves as members of the working class. And yet, since they sought to use democracy in order to undermine class-based solidarities, most politicians resisted the urge to appeal to workers' class interests. For their part, workers were not passive recipients of identities created for them by politicians and labor leaders. Buoyed by a small group of subversive politicians, workers struggled throughout the period to inject class-based language and politics into the electoral arena.

The railroad strike of 1912 ended in defeat. Faced with the near total shutdown of the country's transportation system, the national government allowed the companies to hire replacement workers, and by the end of February the strike had been crushed. But whereas the combined efforts of government and capital could defeat a particular strike effort, they could not make class conflict disappear. Nor could the rhetorical devices of politicians and reporters keep workers' class interests from contaminating the pristine and harmonious sphere of democratic politics. On the contrary, over the next eighteen years the ongoing battle between workers and employers would repeatedly and profoundly impinge upon the electoral process.

This book will trace the struggle to define the political identity of Rosario's workers during the period between the electoral reform of 1912 and the military coup that ended Argentina's experiment in democracy in 1930. During these years, elites pursued a hegemonic project aimed at transforming workers into class-less citizens. But these elites soon found that they could not control the democratic process. The logic of competitive electoral politics greatly expanded the range of political identities

available to workers, who insisted on versions of citizenship that acknowledged and even privileged their class loyalties. The persistence of working-class identity eventually led elite politicians to give up on the nation-building potential of democracy. Convinced that democratic politics exacerbated class conflict, these politicians welcomed the 1930 coup. Moreover, the elite's intransigent opposition to the political representation of class interests pushed workers away from party politics. This analysis of the contested process of identity formation within electoral politics helps account both for Argentina's historic inability to consolidate a stable democracy and for the emergence of that distinctive brand of working-class consciousness that would receive its most influential expression in Juan Perón's populist movement.

The Origins of Argentina's Weak Democracy

For most of the twentieth century, Argentina suffered from severe political instability. The 1930 coup initiated a long series of military interventions in politics, and only in 1983 would a democratic electoral regime be installed that could match the resilience of the nation's first democracy. An extensive historical and social science literature has shed much light on this poor democratic performance, even if it has yet to fully account for it. Political scientists have called attention to the weakness of the party system in modern Argentina.⁶ They argue that Argentine parties did not adequately represent the interests of the nation's two most cohesive and well-organized social classes: the large landowners and the working class. Instead, these two powerful classes relied on their own corporate organizations to defend their interests, remaining aloof from the political system.⁷ Partly as a result of their failure to mediate between these classes and the state, parties were unwilling to define themselves as parts of a larger, pluralist polity. Instead of presenting themselves as the representatives of certain sectors, political parties claimed to represent the nation as a whole and refused to acknowledge the existence of a legitimate opposition. Thanks to this so-called "movementism," parties exacerbated class conflict instead of mediating it. This weak party system undermined political stability and prevented successful democratization. The political arena proved incapable of reconciling the conflicting interests of workers, industrialists, and landowners, producing a stalemate that repeatedly opened the door to military dictatorship.⁸

Often, the weakness of Argentina's party system and the failure of democratization is traced to the Perón regime of 1946–1955. The Peronist combination of import substitution industrialization and corporatist working-class organization produced a powerful labor movement even as it left the power of the landowning oligarchy intact. As long as postwar economic conditions and the initial success of industrial protectionism created a large surplus, the state could attenuate conflict between these

sectors through distributive policies. But once these favorable conditions ended and the Perón regime was overthrown, the well-organized, class-conscious labor movement that Peronism had helped create continued to press its demands outside the political system. Identifying its interests with the exiled Perón instead of with any functioning political party (the Peronist party was proscribed for most of the two decades following the fall of the regime in 1955), the working class was now a destabilizing factor.⁹ But as many scholars have pointed out, this disjunction between the working class and the system of political parties did not originate in 1945. On the contrary, the very success of Perón's corporatist strategy depended upon the existence by the early 1940s of "a large, and well-organized union movement, but one that remained largely outside the party and electoral arenas."¹⁰ Perón took advantage of this situation by championing the cause of social justice, or what he called "real democracy," over and against the institutional democracy backed by the traditional parties. These parties, in turn, helped push workers into the Peronist camp by opposing the pro-labor measures that Perón introduced in the aftermath of the 1943 coup.

Since the wedge between the working class and the political parties predated the rise of Perón, its origins must lie in the democratic period from 1912 to 1930, when Argentine parties and politicians first pursued workers' votes. Here, though, the existing historiography has generated only incomplete explanations. Scholars have argued that the high levels of immigration Argentina received in the decades after 1880 weakened the party system by creating a working class composed primarily of foreigners who did not enjoy the right to vote.¹¹ However, since large-scale immigration had begun over three decades earlier, there was already, by 1912, a sizable generation of native-born workers in Argentina. Automatically granted citizenship and, with it, the right to vote, these sons of immigrants represented a significant working-class electorate.

Although historians have long acknowledged the existence of these working-class voters, they have nevertheless underestimated both the impact of electoral politics on working-class identity and the impact of workers' electoral participation on the political system itself. In his classic work on politics in the democratic era, David Rock examines the electoral strategies of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR or Radical party), the dominant party of the period. He argues that the Radical administration of Hipólito Yrigoyen (1916–1922) briefly sought to attract working-class votes by intervening in support of the labor unions during several major strikes. Nevertheless, Rock concludes that the bulk of the UCR's electoral support came from middle-class groups who, he claims, were particularly susceptible to the party's elaborate patronage network. By depicting Radical voters as largely middle class and by treating workers primarily as union members or Socialist Party supporters, Rock downplays the active participation

of workers in mainstream, electoral politics after the Sáenz Peña Law.¹²

In recent years, historians have begun to revisit these issues. These scholars have raised doubts about a strict correlation between social class and party affiliation, and they have recognized that the Radicals were successful in attracting working-class votes, particularly as the democratic period wore on. Finally, they have begun to examine the content of electoral appeals in order to ask questions about the nature of political representation during the period. Instead of minimizing the participation of workers in electoral politics, some historians argue that the new appeals aimed at voters after the 1912 electoral reform eroded working-class militancy and helped integrate workers into the political system. In other words, the Sáenz Peña Law made new forms of political representation available to workers and, in so doing, reduced the appeal of the anti-electoral, anarchist union movement.¹³ The decline in working-class militancy would culminate during the interwar period, when the perception of significant social mobility, the emergence of new residential patterns, the development of new forms of mass culture, and the impact of nationalist state education would all combine to reinforce an increasingly moderate tendency within the native-born working class. These historians, then, count the effective implementation of universal male suffrage as one of several factors that encouraged working-class sons of immigrants to work within the political system.¹⁴

This important, new historiography has focused scholarly attention on the question of how workers experienced democratic politics. Nevertheless, this book will take issue with the recent literature on two grounds. First, by assuming that working-class consciousness was necessarily incompatible with participation in mainstream politics, historians have prejudged a key issue. As subsequent chapters will show, Argentine workers during this period can be characterized neither as moderate citizens who embraced political and cultural assimilation nor as class-conscious militants who were inevitably hostile to political participation.¹⁵ On the contrary, workers embraced an evolving series of complex and composite political identities, as mainstream, socialist, and renegade politicians, along with anarchist, syndicalist, and communist union leaders competed to represent them. Consequently, I treat democratic party politics neither as an arena removed from workers' lives nor as a co-optive mechanism that necessarily diluted working-class consciousness, but rather as a space in which workers enjoyed new options for collective representation and identification. Second, by emphasizing democracy's capacity to incorporate the working class, recent studies suggest that workers had embraced the political system by 1930, that class conflict had diminished markedly by then, and that therefore the democratic breakdown must have been caused by other factors.¹⁶ By contrast, I will argue that simmering class antagonisms played a key role in the disintegration of Argentina's first democracy. In

so doing, I will uncover the origins of the deep gulf that separated workers from the democratic political parties, paving the way for the subsequent rise of Peronism.

Hegemony and the Multiple Meanings of Democracy

This book approaches the particular interpretive challenges posed by Argentine political development through a theoretical perspective that recognizes both the constructed nature of political identities and the historical specificity of the meaning of democracy. Since Barrington Moore's 1966 classic, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, most historical studies have treated democracy as an outcome produced by a particular pattern of class relations. They have departed from the premise that the success or failure of democratization in a given society is determined by the nature and relative strength of the major social classes.¹⁷ But this approach underestimates the extent to which the political process actually shapes identities, including those based on class. As Pierre Bourdieu argued, social classes only exist in the world to the extent that a "labour of representation" has occurred, through which a vision of the social world and of a particular group's place in it has been successfully imposed on that group.¹⁸ The prevalence of a class-based identity, for example, as well as the specific meanings attached to that identity, are always the result of a complex process of social construction and political representation.

This process of identity formation often takes place in the realm of electoral politics, where parties and candidates seek to mobilize support by constructing a particular vision of the world that speaks to, or interpellates, voters, and thereby constitutes them as coherent groups. Political discourses do not merely address preconstituted social classes; rather, these discourses play a significant role in producing subjects, whether these are social classes or other groups.¹⁹ Moreover, even when class, ethnic, racial, or religious divisions are already operative in a given society, they do not automatically become the determinants of political action. Rather, these divisions become politicized only through a conflictual process in which parties and politicians are often instrumental. As Adam Przeworski and John Sprague have argued, "[p]olitical parties—along with unions, churches, factories, and schools—forge collective identities, instill commitments, define the interests on behalf of which collective actions become possible, offer choices to individuals, and deny them."²⁰ Democracy, then, is not simply an outcome produced when a society's class structure conforms to a certain model; the democratic process itself helps construct identities and interests.²¹

But while democracy constructs political identities, it does not do so according to any one particular pattern. Democracy has meant different things in different historical and cultural contexts and thus has made available a wide range of identities

and political opportunities. Jürgen Habermas has identified two ideal types of political democracy, which have dominated intellectual debate for centuries. The first of these, what he calls “republicanism” or “civic republicanism,” is rooted in the thought of Aristotle and Rousseau and depicts democracy as a process of rational discussion and debate aimed at discovering and achieving the common good. According to this model, political rights are positive liberties that allow citizens to participate in the collective endeavor of deciding which actions best serve the interests of the whole community. Habermas’s second ideal type, derived originally from Hobbes, is “liberalism,” in which democratic politics is not so much a collective discussion as a process of bargaining aimed at forging compromises between the various divergent interests present in society. In the liberal version of democracy, citizens enjoy negative rights that protect their private interests from incursions by the state and by other citizens.²²

Habermas conceptualizes the move from civic republicanism to liberalism as a historical transition. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several European nations saw the consolidation of a “bourgeois public sphere,” in which issues of general interest were decided through rational critical argument. In this close approximation of civic republicanism, citizens confronted one another as equals; what mattered were the merits of the argument advanced, rather than the social status of the speaker. Although premised on a claim of universal accessibility, this classical public sphere was highly exclusive, limited to well-educated, property-owning men. In fact, Habermas argues that it was the expansion of access to the public sphere that eventually undermined the high-level, critical discourse that had been its hallmark. As ever more people participated in public life, social inequalities could no longer be ignored. These inequalities, increasingly embodied in organized interest groups, became the basis of discourse and action, and a politics based on the idea of an objective general interest gave way to one based on compromise among a variety of competing, private interests.²³

For Habermas, then, the rise of liberalism was a response to the growing tension between the quality of public discourse and the quantity of participation. Liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville confronted the problem of how to maintain the virtues of the bourgeois public sphere in the face of the inevitable expansion of political participation. Their solution was to abandon the notion of a universal interest, or common good, and embrace instead a pluralist model of party politics based on the representation of divergent private interests. Their concern to avoid the “tyranny of the majority” reflected the acknowledgment that competing private interests could not be kept out of politics; instead, political institutions had to be carefully constructed so as to reconcile these interests and produce the most virtuous result possible.²⁴

But while liberalism emerged as a response to the expansion of political participation, this move was not accomplished everywhere to the same degree. For example, the development of democracy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries followed sharply different paths in France and the United States. North American political thinkers, despite their misgivings about the role of parties, came to accept liberalism, while those in revolutionary France could not help but see all organized politics as conspiratorial plotting against the will of the people. In Lynn Hunt's words, "While Americans were working their way, however fitfully, toward party politics and the representation of interests, the French found themselves denying the possibility of 'liberal' politics in spite of their best intentions."²⁵ Patrice Higonnet has outlined this contrast exhaustively, demonstrating that whereas Madison, Adams, and others elaborated a pluralist system of checks and balances in the wake of independence, French thinkers such as the Abbé Sieyès and Condorcet clung to the civic republican ideal of a politics aimed at identifying and realizing the general will.²⁶ Higonnet argues that the French resistance to liberal democracy was due in large part to the existence of a corporate tradition that provided the *sansculottes* with the raw materials necessary to forge a nascent class consciousness. Unlike in the United States, where no such tradition existed, the threat of the class-conscious masses prevented French political thinkers from embracing a system predicated on the representation of private interests.

The contrast between the French and North American cases demonstrates that democracy has meant radically different things in different contexts. A pluralist notion of political representation gained legitimacy in the United States, but not in France, where the very concept of political parties seemed to undermine the unity of the nation. These two contrasting discourses provided Americans and French people with two very different sets of available political identities. The establishment of liberal democracy in the United States made citizenship compatible with class interests, which could be satisfied within a political process based on negotiation and compromise. By contrast, French civic republicanism helped generate violent class conflict by making class identity and political citizenship irreconcilable.²⁷ These two very different historical trajectories suggest that any analysis of democratic politics in a given society needs to pay close attention to the meaning of "democracy" as it was understood by local politicians. Therefore, this book begins by examining the particular notion of democracy mobilized by politicians in the city of Rosario, Argentina.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that while electoral democracy pitted Rosario's politicians against one another in the competition for votes, it also tied them together in the pursuit of a common hegemonic project.²⁸ Drawn overwhelmingly from the

upper echelons of local society, this political elite embraced democracy first and foremost as a means of preserving its class privileges by creating a more legitimate and stable political system. Faced with persistent labor unrest, the prevalence of radical, left-wing ideologies, and the perceived failure to integrate the immigrant masses into society, politicians turned to electoral democracy in the hope that it might create a unified nation of virtuous citizens who would ignore their class interests in order to pursue the common good. Closer to the French model than to the North American one, the Argentine ideal of democracy in this period involved the achievement of a single national interest along civic republican lines, rather than a pluralist process of bargaining among a variety of private interests. In order to achieve a unified nation, politicians tried to impose on the country's new working-class voters a class-neutral political identity as Argentine citizens. This attempt to turn workers into citizens, to replace class identity with citizenship identity, engendered a long struggle over what would count as legitimate political representation in Argentina's new democracy.

The implementation of nonpluralist democracy and the imposition of class-neutral citizenship constituted, to borrow Florencia Mallon's terminology, a "hegemonic process" rather than a "hegemonic outcome."²⁹ In other words, the democratic project was contested and negotiated by the workers who were its intended targets. Argentine elites confronted a more mature and widely diffused working-class identity than their counterparts in revolutionary France. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, workers had fashioned a vibrant, anarchist-led union movement. At the same time, Argentine popular culture, particularly the celebration of the *gaucho*, the rebellious cowboy figure of lore, contained within it counterhegemonic resonances. Sensing an opportunity to win votes, a powerful heterodox faction emerged in Rosarino politics by combining these various discursive elements and fashioning a class-based version of citizenship and national identity. In this way, competitive party politics expanded the discursive repertoire available to workers. By responding creatively and opportunistically to these new discursive possibilities, workers exerted their own influence on the hegemonic process. For example, many workers remained committed unionists even as they actively supported certain mainstream politicians whenever they found it advantageous to do so. By supporting anarchist, antipolitical unions while voting Radical, workers inhabited two identities conceived of as incompatible by their creators.

The struggle among competing notions of citizenship, national identity, and legitimate political representation was the central dynamic of Argentine politics during this period. By tracing that struggle, this book will begin to account for Argentina's long-term failure to construct a stable electoral democracy. Throughout the democratic period, workers clung to class-based identities, pressing their

workplace demands through unions, even as they demanded that their class interests be represented in the arena of party politics. As working-class political identities gained ground and labor unrest persisted, many of Rosario's politicians became disillusioned with democracy, blaming political "demagogues" for fomenting class struggle. From this disillusionment, it was a short step to supporting the military coup of 1930. In other words, workers' refusal to relinquish their class identity as they entered the electoral arena—their insistence on class-based notions of citizenship—led mainstream politicians to give up on the project of turning workers into citizens and to retreat from the idea of democracy altogether.

The Construction of Political Identities in Rosario

This book speaks to central issues in Argentina's national historiography through a case study of politics in Rosario. Therefore, it must be stated at the outset that Rosario was hardly representative of Argentine cities in the 1912–1930 period. In both its social structure and political landscape, the city was unique. Rosario's economic growth began in the middle of the nineteenth century, but took off only in the 1880s, when the arrival of foreign investment and massive immigration transformed the surrounding agricultural zone into one of Argentina's most productive areas. As a result of the relative lateness of this economic development, Rosario, unlike Buenos Aires and the other major Argentine cities, lacked a traditional patrician elite that could trace its roots to the first half of the nineteenth century. Instead, the Rosarino elite was made up largely of immigrants and the children of immigrants.³⁰ Equally significant, politics in Rosario had its peculiarities as well. Unlike the Buenos Aires Conservative Party, which survived the transition to democracy, the oligarchic parties in Rosario and Santa Fe province disappeared soon after 1912. In many cases, conservative politicians remained active, but they did so as members of one of the two parties that had opposed the old political system, the Radicals and the Liga del Sur (later the Progressive Democratic Party, or PDP). By the same token, the Socialist Party never represented a significant electoral threat in Rosario, as it did in Buenos Aires. These differences make it difficult to draw conclusions about political identity formation in Argentina as a whole from an analysis of the particular case of Rosario.

Still, Rosario's status at the time as the nation's second city, both in terms of population and economic importance, makes it worthy of analysis. In fact, Rosario is radically underrepresented in the national historiography. A case study of this major provincial center provides an important corrective to the exclusive focus on Buenos Aires that characterizes most interpretations of this period. Moreover, the larger structural characteristics that Rosario shared with Buenos Aires—its economic

function as a port city, its immigrant working class, and its political transformation in 1912—do enable some careful generalizations. At the very least, conclusions about the democratic process in Rosario can suggest important new directions for research in the Argentine capital. This book analyzes the impact of electoral competition on working-class identity in Rosario and explores the larger hegemonic process that played out as the city's political elite tried to turn workers into citizens.

The first chapter traces the origins of Argentina's nonpluralist model of democratic politics. The chapter begins with the nineteenth-century political thinkers, Juan B. Alberdi and Domingo F. Sarmiento, who argued that democracy required educated, virtuous citizens capable of pursuing the common good. This ideal continued to exert a profound influence decades later, when the conditions for competitive elections based on universal male suffrage were finally established. I argue that Argentine political elites embraced electoral democracy in 1912 not in order to expand representation, but rather as an antidote to what they saw as a crisis of national identity brought on by massive immigration and violent class conflict. Hoping to stabilize their hegemony, these elites rejected any concept of sectoral representation, opting instead for a nonpluralist democracy they believed would create the civilized citizenry imagined by Alberdi and Sarmiento.

Chapter 2 narrows the interpretive focus from Argentine intellectual history to conditions in the city of Rosario on the eve of the democratic era. This chapter provides a close analysis of Rosario's workers and politicians, two groups whose relationship to each other would be fundamentally transformed with the implementation of electoral reform. I argue against the notion that democratic politics provided significant opportunities for upward mobility. While the introduction of democracy did allow some nonelites to attain political office in Rosario, this opening did not extend to the uneducated masses. All but the lowest positions within the government and the party structures remained monopolized by wealthy elites and university-trained professionals. This small, economically privileged elite retained control over the production of political discourse throughout the democratic period.

Chapter 3 analyzes the provincial election of 1912 and the campaign that preceded it, uncovering the central political struggle that was to characterize the democratic era. Rosario's politicians recognized that they now faced a greatly expanded electorate, but even as they attempted to attract workers to their parties, they carefully avoided any appeals to working-class interests. However, one renegade faction broke with this orthodoxy. Led by local Radical Party leader Ricardo Caballero, these politicians depicted workers—both "natives" and the sons of immigrants—as the descendants of the legendary gaucho heroes of Argentina's rural past. By linking images drawn

from the popular cult of the masculine, gaucho hero with an explicit defense of working-class interests, the Caballeristas crafted a powerful political discourse that reconciled working-class identity with Argentine citizenship and national identity. This approach attracted many Rosarino workers to the Radical cause, helping the party win the 1912 election. Caballero's electoral success opened up the possibility that workers might be incorporated into the political system as members of a distinct social class, rather than as de-classed citizens. As a result, the 1912 election inaugurated a lengthy struggle over the meaning of citizenship and the nature of political representation.

The remaining chapters trace this struggle as it played out over the next two decades, until the military coup of 1930 brought Argentina's democratic experiment to an end. These chapters analyze the dynamics of elite political alliances and party schisms, while demonstrating the active role that workers played in the democratic struggle. Through their participation in both party politics and the labor movement, workers expressed their acceptance or rejection of the various appeals aimed at them. While Rosario's sons of immigrants were often anxious to become Argentine, this enthusiasm for assimilation was by no means incompatible with class consciousness. During the democratic period, many workers embraced Caballero's class-based and overtly masculine version of Argentine citizenship, while rejecting the appeals of politicians who ignored their class interests.

Focusing on the 1913-1916 period, chapter 4 examines the fear of Caballerista class politics and the impact that this fear had on the political system that emerged in the early years of democracy. I argue that the stagnation and apparent lack of substance that characterized party politics in this period were byproducts of the ongoing struggle over workers' political identity. Intent on preventing politicians from pandering to working-class interests, provincial legislators blocked the passage of labor reform measures that had enjoyed widespread support across party lines. Moreover, Rosario's parties were so averse to presenting themselves as the representatives of particular social sectors that their platforms tended to converge. Instead of making substantive proposals, candidates attacked their opponents for their allegedly backward and corrupt political methods.

Chapter 5 analyzes the impact of labor unrest on democratic politics, examining the period from 1917 to 1923, when Rosario witnessed the largest and most violent series of strikes in its history. In this context, Caballero could not maintain the alliances he needed in order to remain a force in local politics. I argue that the strike wave proved to elite groups both inside and outside of politics that workers could not be transformed into virtuous citizens. Politicians and observers began to blame democratic politics itself for undermining the social order and destroying the nation. Disillusioned with the democratic

project, many elites now supported efforts to organize society along corporate lines. At the same time, the labor movement faced a rising tide of government repression, and workers began to abandon any hope of securing advantage through party politics.

Chapter 6 examines the ultimate failure of the democratic project. In the aftermath of the strike wave of 1917–1923, the labor movement entered a period of stagnation. During these years, workers adopted a more private, less confrontational attitude. Nevertheless, the mass cultural innovations of the period—particularly the lyrics of tango songs—reveal the persistence of working-class identity. Mainstream politicians reinforced this trend by promoting a conservative working-class identity and a disciplined, nonpolitical union movement as a way of keeping class interests out of politics. The drift toward a democracy premised on a demobilized working class came to an end when developments within national politics gave Caballero the means to achieve a political comeback. Caballero's appointment as Rosario's chief of police in 1928 encouraged the city's unions to launch a massive strike wave in pursuit of higher wages and improved work conditions. As the conflict dragged on, elites and politicians of all parties attacked the police chief for encouraging the strikers. In the end, not only was Caballero forced out of office, but the entire project of transforming workers into citizens had failed as well. The strike wave of 1928 proved that workers retained their class identity; they appealed to the government not as civic-minded voters pursuing the common good, but as union members seeking to advance their class interests. When the military coup brought Argentina's electoral democracy to an end, most Rosarino politicians supported the action.

Unlike previous accounts, this book places workers and class conflict at the center of the history of Argentine democracy. The introduction of a competitive electoral system produced a long struggle over the political identity of Argentina's working-class citizens and over the meanings of "democracy" and "nation." In the end, the behavior of workers on the picket line and in the voting booth represented an insurmountable obstacle to those who sought to incorporate them seamlessly into an irreducibly unified body politic. By clinging to class-based identities, workers exposed the contradiction latent in *La Capital's* news coverage and in elite discourse more generally—the contradiction between the frank acknowledgment of class interests on the one hand and the denial of their political relevance on the other. The contest between workers' class-based identities and the elite ideal of class-neutral citizenship resisted any hegemonic resolution, establishing a pattern that would persist well beyond the democratic period.

CHAPTER ONE

Visions of a Nonpluralist Democracy

The Discursive Construction of a Unified Argentine Nation

Rosarino politicians faced a difficult challenge in 1912, when their own province was to serve as the testing ground for Argentina's new democracy. Changes in the rules governing electoral registration and voting finally lent substance to the Argentine Constitution's promise of universal male suffrage. Thanks to these changes, many of the city's workers suddenly enjoyed the full rights of citizenship. Rosario's politicians now faced the pressing task of winning a competitive election, and they needed to devise a strategy to attract workers' votes. Since a well-organized and militant labor movement had been active in Rosario for over a decade, one might have expected campaigning politicians to cater to working-class demands, at least rhetorically. But the wide majority of the city's politicians, across party lines, studiously avoided any direct appeal to working-class interests. Instead, these politicians employed a democratic discourse that hailed the electorate as an undivided whole and constructed a non-class citizenship identity for the mass of newly enfranchised workers. In this chapter I argue that the class-neutral rhetoric of most Rosarino politicians reflected the predominance in Argentina of a nonpluralist democratic ideal.

The first two sections of the chapter trace the origins of this particular notion of democracy in Argentine political thought. I begin with a brief discussion of the arguments of Argentina's two most important political theorists of the nineteenth century: Juan Bautista Alberdi and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. Despite their many disagreements, Alberdi and Sarmiento both believed that democracy required the evolution of virtuous citizens capable of ignoring their private interests and pursuing the common good. A half-century later, the nonpluralist understanding of democracy they articulated would exert a profound influence on the elite reformers who led the movement to expand suffrage. The drafters of the Sáenz Peña Law envisioned a democracy in which virtuous citizens would engage in rational discussion in pursuit of the common good. While their commitment to this civic-republican ideal reflected the intellectual legacy left by Alberdi and Sarmiento, it was also reinforced by the ideological climate in which they lived. By

the turn of the century, massive immigration and violent labor conflicts had provoked widespread anxiety about the possibility of forging a unified nation amid ethnic heterogeneity and entrenched class divisions. This crisis of national identity pushed elite reformers to embrace a nonpluralist democracy capable of incorporating the masses as de-classed citizens. Seeking to defuse the social conflicts that threatened elite hegemony, President Sáenz Peña and his allies within the electoral reform movement did not intend to bring diverse interests into the political sphere; their notion of democracy, like that of Alberdi and Sarmiento, had no room for any notion of sectoral representation.

The third and final part of the chapter examines how the dominant political discourse in Rosario during the early years of the democratic period developed out of the abstract ideals generated by this intellectual tradition. Rosarino politicians did not merely seek to win elections; they also used electoral democracy as an instrument for nation building, a means of legitimizing the political system and shoring up their own hegemony. In their speeches and propaganda, these politicians avoided any direct appeals to class interests. Instead, they promoted an image of the ideal citizen as a hard-working and rational man in an attempt to forge a national community on the basis of shared masculinity. In addition to this gendered concept of citizenship, Rosario's politicians inherited from Alberdi and Sarmiento the notion that democracy required the evolution of an electorate capable of perceiving the national interest. These ideas produced an internal contradiction within the dominant political discourse by leading politicians to endorse party competition without providing any basis for the division of public opinion into parties. If Argentina was a unified nation with only one set of common interests, then how could there be more than one legitimate political party? By weakening the appeal of the mainstream parties and by inviting contestation, this contradiction structured much of the political conflict of the 1912–1930 period.

Alberdi and Sarmiento: Visions of an Ideal Democracy

Between 1835 and 1852, Juan Manuel de Rosas governed the province of Buenos Aires and, by extension, most of Argentina. Linked to the province's wealthy cattle interests, the so-called "Restorer of Laws" achieved dictatorial powers and pacified the country after decades of civil war. Although Rosas enjoyed substantial popular support, the ruthlessness of his regime, and its reliance on censorship and a secret police, provoked an influential opposition movement among a group of young Argentine intellectuals, known to posterity as the Generation of 1837. Beginning during their exile from Rosas's Argentina and continuing after the dictator's fall,

these dissidents set themselves the task of designing a modern political system that could replace the Rosas regime and ensure the young nation's progress. Specifically, they attacked the Argentine political tradition, in which, as they saw it, military strongmen called *caudillos* secured the blind loyalty of the ignorant masses. Influenced by such European thinkers as Montesquieu, Mill, Saint-Simon, Comte, and Hegel, the Generation nevertheless claimed to be designing solutions that would address the particular problems faced by Argentina.¹ Although the movement's two dominant figures, Juan Bautista Alberdi and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, differed significantly in their prescriptions and became bitter political opponents in the 1850s, they shared a common vision of the form and content of democratic citizenship. Over the next several decades, Argentine attitudes toward democracy would develop within the discursive space constructed by their debates.

Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* exerted a strong pull on the imaginations of those engaged in building the Argentine nation. Alberdi, for one, lauded the book as the "most suitable and most beautiful" political treatise of the many that were then arriving in South America. From it, he drew a critical lesson: Democracy could not simply be imposed by decree, but rather could only blossom among peoples with democratic customs. North American democracy existed in the habits and way of life of North Americans and was the product of a long process of evolution.² This reading of de Tocqueville had depressing implications for the project of implanting a democratic republic in Argentina. To Alberdi and his contemporaries, the inhabitants of Argentina clearly did not live according to the democratic customs of the North American people. Rosas's popularity, and the strength of *caudillismo* in general, demonstrated that the local population was predisposed to following charismatic dictators, not to participating in a democracy. Alberdi and the other members of the Generation of 1837 understood this limitation in racial terms. In *Bases y puntos de partida*, his most influential book, Alberdi declares that "Indian" is synonymous with "savage" and that all signs of civilization in South America are European imports. He bemoans the impossibility of raising the mixed-blood gauchos of the Argentine pampas up to the level of English workers. In order to establish a modern, representative republic, he argues, the people must be transformed.³ But what form should this transformation take? If a democratic government requires a people with suitable customs and if the racial inferiority of the Argentine population prevents it from ever attaining these customs, then how can such a government be constructed in Argentina?

Alberdi's solution to this paradox was a simple one. If European customs were needed, then they must literally be imported; facilitating and attracting immigration was the means to ensure Argentina's material, political, and cultural progress. Europeans

seeking economic opportunity would provide the young nation with the labor power it needed, even as they brought with them the customs that were so sorely lacking in the racially mixed local population. These immigrants would serve as vehicles for a sort of “cultural transplant.” As Alberdi put it, “We want to plant English liberty and French culture in America? Let us bring living pieces of them, in the habits of their inhabitants, and settle them here.”⁴ The political system Alberdi proposed in *Bases*, which was to serve as the blueprint for the Argentine Constitution of 1852, was designed to attract the European workers and capitalists whom he saw as indispensable for the progress of the nation. Toward this end, he developed a model that, in the words of Tulio Halperín Donghi, amounted to “progressive authoritarianism,” a combination of economic liberties and political restrictions.⁵

Alberdi believed that a strong presidency and sharply restricted political liberties for the masses were necessary measures, at least for the moment. In his view, what Argentina needed above all was economic progress. In terms reminiscent of Adam Smith, he argued that the constitution must remove all obstacles to the individual’s pursuit of wealth. The resulting economic growth, spurred by immigration, would cause the social transformation necessary for a transition to democracy. A representative republic could only become a reality when Argentine society was ready for it, when economic growth had transformed and modernized society, and immigration had populated the country with the bearers of good customs. In the meantime, Alberdi argued, the nation must be satisfied with “*la república posible*,” a system that guaranteed civil liberties for all but restricted political liberties to a small minority. A strong constitutional government would provide order while preventing the arbitrary exercise of power that had characterized the Rosas regime. That framework of political institutions, combined with the promise of unlimited economic freedom and opportunity, would attract European workers and capitalists, and generate economic growth. Then, when Argentina had achieved the necessary economic and social structure, the “*república posible*” would give way to a true, democratic republic.⁶

Underlying Alberdi’s belief in the need for an authoritarian political model was the notion that a representative government based on universal suffrage required an educated and capable citizenry. As Alberdi put it, “[s]uffrage of the multitude where the multitude is incapable of it . . . can produce no other practical result than placing the country’s government in the hands of . . . those who are best at getting votes through coercion or trickery.”⁷ Or, as he argued elsewhere, “[t]o take suffrage out of the hands of ignorance and indigence is to assure the purity and wisdom of its exercise.”⁸ This concern was, of course, not unique to Alberdi. De Tocqueville, for one, pointed out that the expansion of suffrage in North America meant that the best candidates

frequently lost elections. Lacking the time, experience, or intelligence to make wise choices, the “common people” often failed to elect the most qualified representatives.⁹ But de Tocqueville and other European liberals believed that this danger could be limited through the application of well-designed institutional mechanisms.¹⁰ By contrast, Alberdi rejected the idea that political institutions could elicit good results from a system based on mass participation. Since he believed that the Argentine masses’ continued allegiance to backward caudillos demonstrated their civic incompetence, Alberdi simply denied them the right to vote. Even though it was intended as a provisional measure, a necessary step in order to foster the immigration and economic growth that would make a truly democratic republic possible, Alberdi’s “progressive authoritarianism” represented a rejection of liberal, pluralist democracy.¹¹

In a famous and occasionally bitter war of words, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento challenged Alberdi’s vision and outlined an alternative model for Argentina’s future. Although his views of the local population were as racist as those of his contemporary and although he shared the latter’s belief in the need for immigration, Sarmiento had a more complex understanding of economic growth. Such growth, he argued, would not result automatically from the arrival of immigrants and the removal of obstacles to entrepreneurial activity. Rather, Sarmiento believed that Argentina needed to undergo a profound sociocultural transformation before it could achieve economic progress. Not convinced that the spontaneous action of European immigrants would be able to accomplish such a transformation, he saw an important role for the government.¹² In order to create a modern republic and to place Argentina on a path to progress, politicians needed to concentrate on two efforts: popular education and land distribution.

Inspired by the U.S. example, Sarmiento advocated an extensive public education system in order to prepare the people to participate competently in a democracy.¹³ He argued that a modern republic had an obligation to mold its citizens, especially in Argentina, where no sense of republican citizenship existed and where immigration threatened the integrity of the nation:

A strong nation without traditions, without history, and among individuals from all points of the globe, cannot be forged except through a strong common education to unite the races and traditions of those peoples in a feeling for the interests, the future and the glory of the new fatherland.¹⁴

For Sarmiento, public education would inculcate a strong sense of national belonging in both immigrants and native-born citizens. Similarly, he argued that the constitution should encourage and facilitate the naturalization process so that immigrants could

become active citizens as quickly as possible. Rejecting Alberdi's "progressive authoritarianism," Sarmiento thus pushed for the incorporation of immigrants into the political system in order to unify the nation: "There must not be two nations, but rather the Argentine Nation."¹⁵ Of course, this inclusive model did not extend to all segments of the population. Sarmiento believed blacks, Indians, and the rural gauchos to be uneducable, and as such, unsuitable for political participation.¹⁶ The democracy he envisioned was to be limited to men whose racial makeup and educational background enabled them to carry out the duties of republican citizenship with intelligence and virtue.

As Halperín Donghi points out, Sarmiento saw education not only as the key to forging a unified republic, but also as a powerful means of preserving order. He believed that education could prevent rebellion by giving poor people the skills they needed to improve their lives. At the same time, Sarmiento recognized that in an unequal society, educating the masses could be dangerous, encouraging the poor to pursue upward mobility without providing them with the material means to do so. In other words, the transformation of inhabitants into citizens had to be accompanied by a transformation of the social order.¹⁷ Once again, Sarmiento's model for this social transformation was the United States, and particularly the Jeffersonian ideal of agrarian democracy. His North American travels had convinced him that "[t]here does not exist in the United States, as there does among us, a class of people destined to the proletariat, and as a result, to misery, dependence, degradation and vice." Sarmiento believed that the existence of such inequalities, fostered by the pattern of large landholdings that characterized the livestock economy, was one of the principal causes of Argentine backwardness. A legacy of the colonial period and of the misguided policies of the first Argentine governments, the concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few men had blocked the spread of civilization and democracy. To remedy this situation, Sarmiento called on the government to distribute public lands in small parcels to groups of immigrant colonists. The result, he hoped, would be a thriving agricultural economy and a class of small, independent landowners who would serve as virtuous citizens, ideally suited to participate in a democratic republic.¹⁸ By establishing a school in each small, agrarian community, Sarmiento hoped to prepare the inhabitants to fulfill their civic duties as well as to create a literate mass of consumers and an integrated national economy.¹⁹

Alberdi, Sarmiento, and the rest of the Generation of 1837 are often accused of turning their backs on native Argentine culture and seeking to import cultural and political models from Europe and North America.²⁰ Although this accusation is not unreasonable, it oversimplifies the Generation's intellectual project. While Alberdi

and Sarmiento did draw many of their ideas from European and American political thinkers, the ideas they chose not to borrow were just as significant. Neither Alberdi nor Sarmiento embraced the pluralist, liberal model of politics that was the principal innovation of such writers as de Tocqueville and Mill. These European thinkers recognized that popular sovereignty implied the incorporation of multiple, competing interests into a previously homogenous public sphere. They developed institutional defenses against the “tyranny of the majority” in order to ensure that no single interest dominated to the exclusion of all others. Neither Alberdi nor Sarmiento concerned themselves with such issues. Profoundly suspicious of the masses who had embraced Rosas and other caudillos, they looked for ways to transform the Argentine population into a virtuous citizenry. The political systems they envisioned had more in common with civic republicanism than they did with pluralist party politics.

Both Alberdi and Sarmiento believed that a representative democracy could only function given a population with special capacities. Alberdi found these capacities lacking in the Argentine people and sought to transplant European culture directly through immigration. Although Sarmiento saw at least some Argentines as redeemable, his emphasis on public education showed that he shared the view that a republic based on popular sovereignty required capable citizens, well trained in the performance of their civic duties. Moreover, both thinkers analyzed the quality of the population—its limitations or capabilities—in evolutionary terms. Whereas Alberdi believed that Argentina needed to achieve a certain level of economic growth before its inhabitants would be ready for a true republic, Sarmiento saw the spread of education and the creation of an egalitarian society of small farmers as the indispensable prerequisites for democracy.²¹ Whether through straightforward economic growth or through a broader process of sociocultural transformation, Alberdi and Sarmiento both hoped that the Argentine people would gradually attain a level of culture or education that would enable their participation in representative democracy.

This desire to bring about an evolution in the quality of the population derived from a belief in the existence of a single, national interest. Both Alberdi and Sarmiento longed for a citizenry capable of perceiving, and acting in accord with, the common good. They both implicitly rejected a politics based on compromise among competing private interests. Alberdi hoped to limit political participation to a small economic elite, whose private interests, he felt, coincided with those of society as a whole. Similarly, Sarmiento espoused agrarian democracy and popular education in order to rectify dangerous social inequalities before opening access to the political arena. Among many other legacies, Alberdi and Sarmiento bequeathed to succeeding generations a vision of democracy that was hostile to pluralist politics.

The Sáenz Peña Law: Democracy as Nation Building

As president of Argentina from 1868 to 1874, Sarmiento did much to foster immigration and spread popular education, and his government's military campaigns against Indians and provincial caudillos proved effective. Nevertheless, it was Alberdi's vision that most directly influenced the shape of the nation's political system in the late nineteenth century. Following nearly three decades of conflict between forces in Buenos Aires province and groups from the interior, General Julio A. Roca came to power in 1880, establishing the city of Buenos Aires as Argentina's federal capital. The regime installed by Roca aimed to guarantee "peace and administration" through a constitutional system modeled on Alberdi's progressive authoritarianism. The result was a federalist government with a strong presidency. An extensive network of government patronage and a fraudulent electoral system, in which no more than 20 percent of the native male population voted, guaranteed the dominance of Roca's party, the Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN). Roca's brutal military assaults on the Indians increased the supply of land, while foreign investment and immigration sparked impressive levels of economic growth.²²

Despite these achievements, the regime installed in 1880 failed to maintain unity within the Argentine elite. The first of a series of schisms occurred in 1890, with the emergence of an opposition coalition led by wealthy landowners and commercial sectors in Buenos Aires. Disgruntled by their exclusion from government patronage, the leaders of the so-called Unión Cívica introduced a new mode of politics, using newspapers and political committees in an attempt to mobilize the urban population against President Juárez Celman. Although the president did resign, the rebellion of 1890 failed to dislodge Roca and his followers from state power. The Unión Cívica split in two, with one faction making a deal with Roca while the other remained in opposition as the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR). The Radicals, led by Leandro Alem and later by Hipólito Yrigoyen, were the most significant political opponents of the regime during the next two decades. Although they did lead armed uprisings again in 1893 and in 1905, the Radicals' most important innovation was probably ideological: They attacked the government's use of electoral fraud and demanded democracy. Avoiding the formulation of an explicit program, the Radicals specialized in moralistic diatribes against the corrupt practices of the "*régimen*," their derogatory term for the PAN government. In the long run, Roca's regime, based as it was on the Alberdian formula of civil liberties for all but political rights for an elite few, proved vulnerable to this assault on its legitimacy.²³

Beginning around the turn of the century, a second schism within elite political circles gave rise to the movement that culminated in the introduction of electoral

democracy in Argentina. During the preceding decade, the Radicals had begun to establish significant bases of support in urban areas. Even more threatening was the emergence in the 1890s of a militant, anarchist union movement among Buenos Aires workers. While Roca and his followers supported a policy of repression to deal with these threats, a growing faction within the government began to back the idea of electoral reform. Led by such men as José Figueroa Alcorta, Roque Sáenz Peña, and Carlos Pellegrini—the latter, one of the regime's leading figures until his break with Roca in 1901—the reformers argued that only the establishment of a nonfraudulent democracy could legitimize the government and guarantee the preservation of order. During the presidencies of Figueroa Alcorta and Sáenz Peña, power was finally stripped from Roca's group. In 1912, with the backing of President Sáenz Peña, the Argentine Congress passed several significant electoral reform measures. Known collectively as the Sáenz Peña Law, these measures ushered in Argentina's first democratic period.

The installation of a competitive, electoral democracy represented a strategic move on the part of a wealthy, conservative elite intent on preserving its own power. Since the reforms restricted the right to vote to citizens, they excluded the unnaturalized immigrants who made up the bulk of the Argentine working class. By conceding political rights to the native-born, middle-class sectors represented by the Radicals, elites hoped to curtail the cycle of rebellions initiated in 1890. Likewise, they expected that a few members of the Socialist Party would win election to Congress, where they would represent working-class demands and thereby reduce the appeal of anarchism. Meanwhile, the reformers continued to support the use of harsh, anti-anarchist legislation, seeing no conflict between democratization and the repression of working-class dissent. These elites firmly expected that a reformed electoral system would lead to the formation of a new conservative party backed by a significant degree of mass support. As one historian concludes, the Sáenz Peña Law was "an act of calculated retreat by the ruling class."²⁴ By relinquishing a small measure of their political domination, elites hoped to better protect their own interests.

Yet elite enthusiasm for democracy reflected more than a simple electoral calculus; democratization was a crucial component of a larger ideological project aimed at constructing a more stable nation. Reformers such as Pellegrini and Sáenz Peña turned to democracy at a moment of extreme anxiety over national identity. Beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century, high levels of immigration had been accompanied by violent conflicts between labor and capital. To reformist elites, the new threats to their class interests—the threats from below posed by anarchism and Radicalism—arose from the lack of a cohesive national identity. Class divisions erupted into class warfare, they felt, because foreign-born workers and their children did not see themselves as members

of the national community. Confronted by a society that threatened to disintegrate along class and ethnic lines, elites saw the establishment of an open, competitive electoral system as a means to build a more cohesive, harmonious Argentine nation and thereby stabilize their own hegemony. They embraced democracy not in order to expand political representation to subordinate groups or to incorporate diverse sectoral interests into the political process. Rather, they hoped that electoral reforms would facilitate the construction of a unified nation out of a chaotic mixture of foreign elements.²⁵ This preoccupation with the problem of forging a cohesive nation predisposed Argentine elites to embrace the nonpluralist democratic ideal elaborated by Alberdi and Sarmiento.

The immigration desired by the Generation of 1837 materialized in the last decades of the nineteenth century. But instead of becoming middle-class farmers, as Sarmiento had envisioned, most of the newcomers joined the ranks of the unskilled labor force in Buenos Aires, Rosario, and the other cities of the Argentine littoral. Beginning in the 1890s, many of these immigrant workers began to join the anarchist union movement. From 1902 on, a series of massive general strikes threatened the social order, leading to harsh, repressive measures by the state and violent clashes between workers and police. In 1910, the government held a huge public celebration to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the revolution that led to Argentine independence. But even as the parades and patriotic speeches lauded the incredible economic progress of recent years, the celebratory mood was undermined by anarchist dissent. Rumors of a general strike planned to coincide with the national holiday led to clashes with the police, which culminated when the anarchists planted a bomb in Buenos Aires's famous Colón Theater. In response, Congress passed the *Ley de Defensa Social*, the toughest piece of anti-anarchist legislation yet.²⁶

These mounting social tensions provoked a widespread preoccupation with national identity among Argentine intellectuals and politicians. Nationalist writers such as Ricardo Rojas and Manuel Gálvez attacked Argentina's founding fathers for turning their backs on the country's native culture and warned that unrestricted immigration had undermined the nation's "moral unity." Rojas, in particular, argued that a spiritual rebirth could only be achieved through the introduction of nationalist curricula in the schools.²⁷ The government responded to these demands with a series of educational reforms aimed at transforming the public school into "a crucible in which to fuse the country's heterogeneous immigrant and native elements into a homogeneous group."²⁸ Between 1908 and 1912, José María Ramos Mejía, president of the Argentine Education Council, removed texts by foreign authors from the public school curriculum, established a daily pledge of allegiance to the flag, and institutionalized the celebration of national holidays. Among many other measures, public school

students were now required to recite a “patriotic catechism,” which established “loving the fatherland” as the first duty of the good citizen.²⁹ Meanwhile, the government began to place restrictions on private schools run by immigrant groups.

While educators attempted to “Argentinize” the children of immigrants, other groups sought solutions to the violent class conflict that threatened to destroy the nation. In the wake of the papal encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Argentine Catholics began to form groups aimed at fostering “class harmony.” The most important of these, the Workers’ Circles, made significant organizational advances in the first decade of the twentieth century. They pressured the government for pro-labor reforms, while preaching against leftist ideologies.³⁰ The movement for social reform even enjoyed some success within the state, as a group of “reformist liberals” came to exert a major influence on social policy. In contrast to the nationalists, these academics and professionals continued to look to Europe for solutions to Argentina’s social problems. Sharply anticlerical and deeply influenced by positivism, they hoped to complement the repressive anti-anarchist laws with modern, progressive labor legislation. At times in collaboration with the Socialists, they argued for increased state intervention in order to minimize labor conflicts and proposed legislation to improve working conditions and to create permanent strike arbitration boards. Although these social reformers were less concerned with promoting native culture, they shared the nationalists’ anxiety over the country’s apparent moral and political decline. Men such as José Nicolás Matienzo and Joaquín González saw the solution to Argentina’s social problems as one aspect of a larger process of moral and spiritual regeneration. Not coincidentally, many of these same liberals were directly involved in the discussions and debates that produced the Sáenz Peña Law.³¹

Like almost all other intellectuals of the period, be they nationalists, Catholics, or liberals, the men who forged Argentina’s first democracy were preoccupied with nation building. Carlos Pellegrini, whose conversion to the reformist cause in 1901 was crucial to the success of the movement, identified the absence of a “national soul” as the worst obstacle the country faced.³² Horrified by labor unrest and by the seemingly unending cycle of Radical rebellions, Pellegrini and his allies looked to democracy as a means of forging national unity. They felt that the introduction of a true representative republic would solve the government’s legitimacy crisis, convincing the political opposition that it could compete more effectively by participating in the system than by attacking it. More important, they believed that by giving people a stake in their government, a reformed electoral system would transform them, turning an apathetic and selfish populace into the virtuous, educated citizenry that Sarmiento had imagined. It was on these grounds that Sáenz Peña justified a provision to make voting obligatory: “[W]e need to create the voter, taking him out of the dark corner

of egoism and into the revitalizing light of popular deliberations.”³³ By granting effective political rights to the native-born masses, the reformers hoped to awaken “that precious treasure of Argentine civic feeling.”³⁴ They hoped to create “active citizens” with the unselfish desire to work for the national interest, an interest they conveniently understood as synonymous with their own. Elite reformers argued that the country’s high level of economic growth and the spread of popular education had finally made the goal of a virtuous citizenry achievable.³⁵ With Alberdi’s and Sarmiento’s prerequisites fulfilled, the people were ready for democracy.

In their emphasis on creating harmony and their desire to promote the national interest over the selfish demands of divergent groups, the reformers within the government had much in common with their political enemies, the Radicals, whose ideology was also imbued with a concern for the nation. Without specifying any proposals beyond the demand for democracy, the Radicals were careful to make their appeals as inclusive as possible. Hipólito Yrigoyen argued that the UCR was not a conventional party, but rather “a conjunction of forces emerging from national opinion.” He insisted that the party did not represent any one interest to the exclusion of others: “[I]ts bosom nurtures all the elements which sincerely wish to offer themselves in the service of the country’s true welfare.”³⁶ Yrigoyen’s vision of democracy as enabling a moral regeneration and his continued emphasis on such concepts as “the common good” and “the national character” have been attributed to the influence of Krausism, an early nineteenth-century German philosophy. Like the Krausists, Yrigoyen viewed society as an organic hierarchy and argued that state policies must benefit the whole. The Radical leader promised that free elections would create a harmonious nation, replacing a country “drowned in competing pressures.”³⁷ He imagined democracy not as a competition among divergent interests, but rather as a means of bringing the nation together as a harmonious whole. Whether it was inspired by Krausism or not, this nonpluralist political philosophy had much in common with the dominant vision of democracy. Yrigoyen may well have exerted a significant influence on the eventual shape of the electoral reform law,³⁸ but even if he did not, his understanding of how democracy should work was not far removed from that of the government reformers.

Like Yrigoyen, the elite reformers who enacted electoral reform envisioned a democracy that bore little in common with pluralism. Sáenz Peña argued that by reducing popular apathy, democracy would disarm the fringe groups that threatened the nation: “Without the selfish inertia of the majority, the minorities which agitate inside all nations would never be able to endanger the institutional or political order, or even the foundations of the social order.”³⁹ This argument was grounded in a logic that

runs counter to the fundamental premises of liberal, pluralist politics. European liberals envisioned a democracy in which divergent interests would compete, negotiate, and counterbalance one another. Sáenz Peña, by contrast, wanted to install democracy in order to consolidate a unified majority capable of defending the national interest from the attacks of misguided minorities. His democratic ideal involved achieving the common good through rational discussion and debate. The reformers repeatedly called for a "politics of principles," or in Sáenz Peña's words, "a government of liberty, discussion and consideration."⁴⁰ They claimed that democracy would create citizens capable of ignoring their particular interests and pursuing the good of the nation through sober contemplation of the programs presented by competing parties.

This nonpluralist vision of democracy helped determine the specific shape of the electoral reform laws that were eventually passed. In addition to expanding the electorate by implementing new voter lists, the reforms instituted secret and obligatory voting as well as a system of representation called the "incomplete list." According to this system, voters would choose among lists of candidates presented by the various parties. The number of candidates on each list, however, was not to exceed two-thirds of the number of offices to be filled. If nine seats in the legislature were being disputed, then each party would present a list of six candidates. This mechanism guaranteed a type of minority representation: The party that finished second in the voting automatically received one-third of the seats being contested. In the above example, the winning party placed its six candidates in the legislature, while the runner-up received three seats. Sáenz Peña praised the new system not because it allowed the representation of divergent interests, but because it assured national harmony: "From today on, there will be victors, naturally, but there will no longer be vanquished."⁴¹ Although it was not a true system of proportional representation, the president argued that the incomplete list was the closest thing possible, given Argentina's lack of well-organized, disciplined parties.⁴² Sáenz Peña's minister of the interior, Indalecio Gómez, made a similar argument during the congressional debates on the reform laws. With the incomplete list, he argued, the opposition would win the representation allotted the minority, leaving the government in power but granting Congress a heretofore unattainable level of popular legitimacy. In addition, the guarantee of minority representation would encourage the formation of permanent parties. Since the government's plan called for the division of the country into only fifteen electoral districts (the fourteen provinces and the capital) these new parties would tend to be truly national and centralized.⁴³ Through these electoral mechanisms, Gómez and Sáenz Peña aimed to promote the formation of parties that would organize popular opinion, focusing it on the national interest.

Although the reformers did not all agree on the best means of implementing popular sovereignty, they did share a commitment to a fundamentally nonpluralist vision of democracy. During the congressional debates on the Sáenz Peña Law, Joaquín González, a major figure in the movement for electoral reform, took exception to the incomplete list. González argued that the proposed system put too much distance between voter and representative. It would not encourage the government's stated goal of stimulating the emergence of active citizens because it did not allow the people to participate in the selection of candidates and programs. According to González, the centralized parties produced by the incomplete list would name their candidates in closed committee negotiations, leaving the people no alternative but to blindly sanction their choices. He argued, instead, for a system modeled on that of the United States, in which the country would be divided into many small districts, each of which would elect a single representative to the Chamber of Deputies. González had initially proposed this reform in 1902, when he served as Roca's minister of the interior. Although the measure was passed by Congress and implemented for the 1904 elections, it was repealed shortly thereafter.⁴⁴ During the debates of 1911–1912, González continued to insist on the superiority of the single-member voting district. By bringing the citizen into close contact with the candidate and by allowing localities to select their own representatives, this system would destroy popular apathy. Paradoxically, it would produce national unity by representing divergent interests. As González put it, his proposal was the only one capable of “maintaining [Argentina's] internal and organic differences, within the great unity of patriotic and national feeling.”⁴⁵ By assimilating the representation of particular interests into a democratic model still designed to produce harmony, González inched toward an acceptance of pluralism.

Not surprisingly, the Argentine Congress rejected the more pluralist model of electoral reform proposed by González. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that even the representative democracy he envisioned fell short of a truly pluralist politics. González saw no danger in a system of proportional representation precisely because he believed that all citizens shared a common, national interest and that the Argentine people were capable of perceiving that interest. He argued that there was no need to worry about the electoral participation of the Socialists, for example, because the obligation to attract popular votes made parties more responsible and thus less of a threat to the social order.⁴⁶ It was the incomplete list, he argued, that by encouraging backroom deal making, would produce a congress composed of “divergent, incoherent and personalist groups,” beholden to “merely political interests” instead of “the national and permanent interests which affect the social organism in its entirety.”⁴⁷ By giving representation to small localities, González intended not to incorporate competing interests, but

to rid politics of the selfish and corrupt pursuit of personal gain and inaugurate a rational discussion aimed at realizing the national interest.

Argentine political life will then be a life of struggle, the struggle of ideas, the struggle of programs and not the struggle of personal influences, of job hunting, of sinecures and privileges, which in our country has frequently been the currency in which electoral services are purchased.⁴⁸

González's proposed system was intended first and foremost as a means of enabling this vision of a politics of ideas dedicated to the realization of the national interest.

Furthermore, both González and Sáenz Peña subscribed to the evolutionary logic espoused by Alberdi and Sarmiento. Both believed that true, representative democracy required citizens with a highly developed civic consciousness and that such consciousness would evolve as the country progressed. They premised their reform proposals on the argument that Argentina had, in fact, achieved the level of "public reason," as Sáenz Peña put it, that was lacking in Sarmiento's day.⁴⁹ This faith in the progress made by the Argentine people, however, was tempered by a distinct elitism, detectable in the proposals of both Sáenz Peña and González. The representatives of the executive espoused the incomplete list, in part, because they felt that it would guarantee the continued rule of "distinguished people," in the words of Interior Minister Gómez.⁵⁰ Likewise, González believed that his system would give local notables a decisive advantage in elections.⁵¹ As Argentina prepared to begin its experiment in democratic politics in 1912, reformist elites continued to view the masses with ambivalence. They intended to incorporate the common people into the political process, but their notion of popular sovereignty, of a democracy geared toward the national interest, remained hierarchical. In granting political rights to subordinate groups, their intention was not to empower the masses in a way that would challenge elite hegemony, but rather to build a nation that would lend legitimacy and stability to a political system run by elites.

Virile Citizens and Principled Parties: Rosarino Political Discourse at the Dawn of Democracy

After the passage of the Sáenz Peña Law in February 1912, those interested in the Argentine democratic experiment turned their attention to Santa Fe province, where on 31 March, voters would elect a new governor and vice governor. Although the provisions of the reform were not yet binding in provincial elections, the Santa Fe election was to be the first in which military conscription lists would replace the

sharply restrictive voter rolls of the past. Moreover, since the province was governed by a provisional “intervention” imposed by the federal government, President Sáenz Peña was able to ensure the overall fairness of the contest. As a result, Santa Fe politicians, including those in Rosario, the province’s largest city, were the first to grapple with the implementation of democratic principles that had, until now, existed only in the abstract. In a hard-fought campaign that began over a year before election day, two relatively new parties—the UCR and the Liga del Sur, the latter a Rosario-based party—competed with each other and with the remnants of the province’s conservative factions. The Radicals’ victory in the March election ushered in eighteen years of UCR dominance within the province and presaged the party’s victory in the nationwide presidential election of 1916. More important, the Santa Fe gubernatorial campaign of 1911–1912 was the moment in which Argentine politicians first confronted a mass electorate. Radicals and Liguistas, despite their programmatic differences, faced the challenge of popular sovereignty with a set of common attitudes and ideas about democracy and politics. Drawing on the writings of men such as Alberdi, Sarmiento, Yrigoyen, Sáenz Peña, and González, Rosarino politicians envisioned a democratic politics based on the realization of the common good. They saw in electoral democracy an instrument for nation building, an opportunity to disseminate a class-neutral citizenship identity in order to secure their hegemony and legitimize their right to rule. From the very beginning of the democratic period, Rosarino politicians of all parties, like their predecessors and contemporaries on the national scene, revealed a profound distrust of pluralist politics.

Following the 1912 election, Santa Fe’s newly elected Radical governor, Manuel Menchaca, articulated his vision of democratic politics. He confidently asserted that the introduction of unrestricted suffrage would end the series of internal rebellions that had plagued the country, installing a “fertile peace [in] our institutions.” Since his government was the “genuine emanation of the sovereignty of the people,” Menchaca pledged that it would always pursue “the good of the province and of the fatherland.”⁵² By characterizing democracy as a means of forging harmony and realizing the national interest, he demonstrated his commitment to the logic espoused both by Radical thinkers such as Yrigoyen and by reformers such as González and Sáenz Peña. Following this logic, the governor described a notion of political representation that privileged the nation in its entirety over any particular sectoral interests. The new government, he declared, “[l]istens to and aims to interpret faithfully the palpitations of the collective soul.” This last term was significant, for it implied a vision of society united by common interests. As a democratically elected official, Menchaca claimed to represent not one specific sector or another, but the people as a whole. He

promised to fulfill “the legitimate demands of public opinion” or “the aspirations of the people,”⁵³ not simply those of the majority that had elected him. This universalist rhetoric was hardly unique to the Radical party. The pro-Liga del Sur newspaper, *La Capital*, frequently invoked the people’s “collective soul” in its political analyses,⁵⁴ and campaign propaganda trumpeted the Liga as “the first party that will impose the will of a people.”⁵⁵

In addressing the issue of constitutional reform, Menchaca stressed his opposition to the political representation of sectoral interests. Much-needed reforms, such as the enactment of municipal autonomy, had been resisted in Santa Fe, he argued, by a minority that aimed to consolidate “the advantages of classes, places or moments foreign to the general and permanent interests.”⁵⁶ Committed to a civic-republican ideal, the governor opposed the inclusion of class interests in democratic politics. Instead, he believed that citizens should ignore their private interests and participate as equals in public discussion directed toward the pursuit of the common good. In order to foster this sort of intellectual discussion and debate in politics, Menchaca argued that democratic representatives should enjoy a free mandate; they should not be limited to representing the interests and demands of their constituencies.⁵⁷ As the governor put it, democratically elected legislators must not be “restricted by the will of the majority.” Rather, as independent citizens, they ought to be free to engage in rational discussion and to determine their opinions in the course of this debate. For Menchaca, politicians were to represent the will of the people, but this representation could not be a passive process. Representatives would fulfill their role in democracy only by “directing and channeling the demonstrations of public opinion within broad, generous and elevated constitutional objectives.”⁵⁸ José Guillermo Bertotto of the Partido Demócrata Progresista (PDP), the successor to the Liga del Sur, agreed that politicians must play a pedagogical role. A true political leader, he argued, “is the conscious instrument that moves a capable people.”⁵⁹ But as Bertotto’s statement reveals, it was not enough to have responsible politicians. The success of the democratic experiment depended on the creation of “capable” and virtuous citizens, committed to the good of the nation.

Political elites in Rosario were hardly immune to the anxiety about national identity that affected virtually all Argentine intellectuals of this period. Like Buenos Aires, Rosario had also become home to thousands of European immigrants, most of whom worked as unskilled laborers. Moreover, anarchist labor organizing had achieved ominous proportions in Rosario, leading to several citywide general strikes and various confrontations with the police. In this context, well-to-do Rosarinos worried that the mass of recent arrivals lacked any sense of loyalty and commitment to the Argentine nation. Reflecting these concerns, *La Capital* called on the government

to organize a public celebration to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Argentine flag, “the sacred emblem,” as the paper put it, “that symbolizes our nationality.” The editorial writer argued that as a new nation composed of a mix of races and nationalities, Argentina needed to encourage patriotic feeling among its inhabitants. Coming as it did in the run-up to the 1912 election, this plea focused specifically on the need to Argentinize the nation’s new voters:

It is not enough that Argentine law makes all those born in the territory of the Republic Argentines; it is imperative that those new sons drink it [national feeling] in the atmosphere, in the patriotic celebrations which impress the spirit in the early years of life like photographic plates struck by light. May those new citizens, those future defenders of the native nationality, be infected with love for the fatherland.⁶⁰

Because anyone born in Argentina was a citizen by law, the need to inculcate patriotic feelings in the sons of immigrants was made more urgent by the introduction of democracy. Virtuous citizens able to pursue the general interest of the Argentine nation were vital to the success of the democratic project as it was imagined by Sarmiento and enacted by Sáenz Peña; it was now up to the political elites in Rosario and elsewhere to create these citizens out of the country’s heterogeneous masses.

The creation of capable, virtuous citizens was seen, in part, as a task for the public schools. Under Menchaca, the provincial council of education embraced the challenge of breaking what it called “the concept of double fatherland (*la doble patria*)”—the divided loyalties produced and reinforced in immigrant households. Like *La Capital*, the members of the council saw the persistence of foreign traditions in these households as “a somewhat insurmountable barrier to our spirit of nationality.” They argued that such activities as the pledge of allegiance to the flag and the celebration of patriotic holidays, as well as the requirement that all basic instruction be given in Spanish, would encourage the emergence of Argentine sentiments in the children of immigrants.⁶¹ The council’s emphasis on fomenting patriotism was part of a broader pedagogical project designed to construct a nation free of social conflict. Toward this end, it devised a curriculum aimed at fostering altruism and forging individuals who were capable of acting “for the good of others” as well as in their own interest. Following what it claimed to be the latest in educational science, the council divided the primary school program into a four-year cycle of basic instruction, followed by two additional years in which students, divided according to their aptitudes, would either study science and letters or receive some sort of vocational training. This

model was designed to satisfy the divergent needs of all segments of the “social organism,” in order to foster harmony within the nation.⁶²

In a speech on the “social function of the school,” the president of the council of education, Isaac Francioni, made explicit the connection between pedagogy and politics. Echoing the council’s rationale for its new program of studies, Francioni argued that schools could no longer concern themselves solely with individual advancement; in a world of heightened social tensions, they must also pursue the elevated goal of achieving “a more acceptable and more general collective well-being.”⁶³ Teachers must encourage “social integration” by emphasizing cooperation among students. In order to overcome ethnic divisions, they should design their history classes so as to foster the emergence of patriotic sentiments. For Francioni, the introduction of democracy placed a special burden on the schools: “In this happy stage of the country’s historical development, characterized by a comforting blooming of democracy . . . the school is assigned an extremely important role in regard to the perfection and purification of our institutions and political customs.”⁶⁴ For Francioni, the electoral reform laws represented an important tool for unifying a heterogeneous people. By educating students in the practical skills and knowledge they needed in order to perform their civic duties responsibly, the schools would help ensure that democracy achieved its goal of producing social harmony.

Francioni and other educators believed that the advent of democracy required the creation of a new type of citizen, one imbued with what the Rosario-based politician, Alcides Greca, labeled “the new patriotism.” Sharply anticlerical and committed to a modernizing reformism, Greca was a self-described “liberal” who had dabbled in anarchism as a university student, before becoming a member of the Radical party.⁶⁵ In a speech given in Santa Fe during the national holidays of May 1913, he outlined his vision of a modern, progressive form of patriotism, which would encourage the formation of Argentine national identity without lapsing into xenophobia. Repeating an argument made by Francioni and others, Greca rejected the so-called “cult of the warriors,” in which heroic generals and wars were the sole objects of patriotic commemoration, while the great thinkers and statesmen of Argentine history were ignored. He argued that while the people knew the legends of such violent caudillos as El Chacho and Facundo Quiroga, they were completely ignorant of the achievements of Argentine scientists and political thinkers. The result was an impoverished patriotism, which instead of raising the level of public discourse, encouraged hypocritical politicians to win popular support by staging “affected and riotous demonstrations.”⁶⁶ To replace the celebration of warfare, Greca proposed his new patriotism, “a respectable sentiment because it speaks to us of civic honesty, mutual

tolerance, love of progress and of work.”⁶⁷ He stressed the importance of work by drawing a contrast between the “neighborhood of workers” in which he was speaking and the more aristocratic sections of the city. In the latter, the occasional sounds of church bells and army trumpets were a reminder of a kind of “colonial stillness.” Meanwhile, in the workers’ neighborhood, “all is life, movement, action, and the voice of the mystical bronze and of the warrior’s trumpet is replaced by the whistle of the factory sirens calling the laborers to work.”⁶⁸ Greca’s patriotism celebrated the achievements of Argentina’s great intellectuals even as it lauded work as the most direct means of fostering the nation’s progress.

Greca’s contrast between stagnant aristocrats and progressive laborers was hardly an unusual rhetorical gesture for politicians of the day. But this pro-work discourse was especially common in Rosario, a city with virtually no native aristocracy. Composed mainly of immigrants and their children and grandchildren, the Rosarino economic elite defined itself in contradistinction to the native, patrician classes of Buenos Aires and the city of Santa Fe. Rejecting the aristocratic cultural traditions of those cities, Rosario’s wealthy sectors self-consciously celebrated their bourgeois character—that is, their capacity for commercial enterprise and making money.⁶⁹ Travelers to the city in the early twentieth century commented, almost without fail, on the peculiar lack of high cultural institutions in what was then a thriving metropolis.⁷⁰ But even as it was criticized for its lack of culture, Rosario was celebrated for its commitment to hard work. The city’s reputation as an “industrial and laborious” place earned it the nickname, “the Argentine Chicago.”⁷¹ In this context, it became common, if not de rigueur, for local politicians to invoke the “hard-working people (*pueblo laborioso*)” of Rosario or of Argentina as a whole.⁷² In so doing, they were not celebrating the working class, but rather voicing a more general, anti-aristocratic sentiment broad enough to include all Rosarinos. In this sense, capitalist entrepreneurs were just as much a part of the hard-working Rosarino community as were the factory workers Greca described. Indeed, one newspaper dedicated to local commerce and industry celebrated a group of Rosario’s most prominent capitalists by calling them “vigorous athletes of work,” “the muscle men of our city,” and “the great pillars of labor.”⁷³

But even if Greca’s homage to labor was not intended to single out the working class, it was still a significant rhetorical move. In the early years of Argentine democracy, politicians sought not only to attract electoral support, but also to construct a new identity for the nation’s voters. Just as the members of the Santa Fe Council of Education attempted to create new citizens with civics lessons and patriotic celebrations, these politicians used their speeches and propaganda to carve out a

model of the civic-minded, responsible participant in politics. Greca's speech on "the new patriotism" was one example of this effort at identity construction. His depiction of the ideal, patriotic citizen as a hard-working, virtuous man became a recurring theme in the political discourse of the period. Twelve years after Greca made his speech, Santa Fe Governor Ricardo Aldao drew on similar imagery to compliment the citizens of Rosario as a "[h]ard-working and cultured people, which has shown the same enthusiasms in the hour of civic duty [*las jornadas de civismo*] as it has in producing its material greatness."⁷⁴ In this very typical statement, Aldao explicitly linked the anti-aristocratic, masculine value of hard work with responsible voting behavior.

The message of this type of rhetoric was that being a virtuous citizen and voting conscientiously was a productive, manly activity. Over and over again, political commentators and politicians of all parties identified *civismo*, or civic consciousness, as a masculine trait. During the 1912 campaign, Liga del Sur leader, Enzo Bordabehere, described the party's triumphant general strike of 1909 as "the most vibrant and highest note of the virility of this people."⁷⁵ According to this view, a political protest aimed at peacefully challenging high taxes and government corruption represented truly masculine behavior. But more frequently, a well-cast vote was enough to prove one's manliness. When the Liga del Sur defeated the Radicals in Rosario's municipal elections, *La Capital* congratulated the people of the city for proving their "virility and civismo."⁷⁶

In light of the fact that women were denied the right to vote, it seems almost redundant for politicians and observers to have stressed the manliness of political activity. But by describing responsible, unselfish civic behavior as virile, Rosarino politicians were selling democracy—and particularly, their vision of it—to the many men who were newcomers to political participation. Moreover, they were constructing an image of a political community that encompassed all of the disparate sectors of male society. In other words, the appeal to masculinity was a way of bracketing the divergent interests of the various groups being incorporated into politics. The newly enfranchised electorate was divided by differences of class as well as ethnicity, but by focusing on the voters' gender—their status as hard-working, productive men—politicians emphasized the electorate's homogeneity. Masculinity bridged the gaps among voting citizens, whether they were the heads of well-established, bourgeois families or the sons of working-class immigrants. This project of constructing unity in the image of the hard-working Argentine man was particularly crucial because the dominant understanding of democracy was premised on the existence of a single national interest. Sarmiento had hoped to create an egalitarian, agrarian society that would produce citizens capable of putting aside their particular, selfish interests and

pursuing the common good. Now that democracy had been installed in an unequal society, Rosarino politicians needed to create and to publicize an image of the electorate as having a common set of interests. The gendering of responsible political behavior was an important element in this effort.

Within Rosarino political rhetoric, masculine, virile *civismo* was embodied not only in the patriotic pursuit of the common good, but also in the disciplined use of reason. The Liguista leader Bordabehere called on members of his party to “organize and discipline ourselves in order to form the column of patriots which, with the potent lever of reason and consciousness, must sustain the well-being of the province.”⁷⁷ This articulation between manliness and intellect was a prominent feature of Radical rhetoric as well. In a letter to *La Capital*, one Sergio Barcala complained that the list of Radical candidates running for the position of gubernatorial elector from Rosario was imposed by the party bigwigs in Buenos Aires and contained very few actual Rosarinos. The list, he argued, included various “plutocrats,” but excluded the young, university-educated Radicals of Rosario, “well grounded in honest manliness and independence. These party members of academic cut and virile timber have been confined to the list of deputies, in order to break any attempt at independence.”⁷⁸ By linking manliness, independence, and education, this rhetoric implicitly feminized those who allowed themselves to be led instead of applying their own intelligence to issues of public interest. Barcala’s association of masculinity and academic intellectuality recalled Greca’s and Francioni’s argument that Argentine schoolchildren ought to learn about the great thinkers of the nation’s past, in addition to the warriors. But more than simply stressing the importance of intellectuals, Barcala’s rhetoric made intellectual ability an important component of masculine, civic virtue.

Radicals like Barcala were not the only politicians who described intellectuality as a manly characteristic. Fermín Lejarza, the PDP candidate for governor in 1920, defended himself from charges that he was an aristocrat by emphasizing his membership in the community of hard-working men: “I do not know if my brow bears the imprint of my intellectual labor, but I know that my hands are not those of a fop.”⁷⁹ One of the PDP’s political committees made a similar point in a 1916 campaign manifesto by referring to the party’s candidates as “workers of the new democracy.”⁸⁰ This rhetoric was not meant to indicate the working-class origins of the candidates, most of whom were doctors or lawyers. Rather, the point was to bridge the gap between the university-educated intellectuals running for office and the more or less plebeian masses who made up the majority of the new electorate. But much more was at stake than simply making these candidates palatable to the voters. As this same manifesto put it, the PDP aimed to unite

in one single aspiration of greatness: workers, farmhands, intellectuals, in short, all the men who feel and think that it is patriotic to struggle in the civic arena in order to bring to the government of the country the Argentines of the Partido Demócrata Progresista, who will realize the modern desire for order and for social, economic and institutional progress.⁸¹

The effort to link workers and intellectuals on the level of rhetoric was one aspect of the larger project of forging a unified national community. By expanding the ideal of the hard-working, virile Argentine citizen to include elite intellectuals, these politicians hoped to construct a nation homogenous enough to allow a nonpluralist democracy to function.

The depiction of intellectual achievement as a masculine virtue also helped the political elite sell its vision of a democracy based on rational critical discussion. Like Sáenz Peña and González, Rosarino politicians consistently called for a “politics of principles,” hoping that democracy would replace the corrupt, personalist governments of the past with an open competition of programs and ideas. In this vision of democracy, as in the bourgeois public sphere, political competitors would stand or fall on the quality of their proposals and the extent to which these proposals served the national interest, rather than on their social status or on their ability to deliver patronage. This commitment to a politics of ideas was epitomized by the PDP’s recurring campaign slogan, “*¡Adelante los que piensan!*” [“Onward all those who think!”] but it was by no means monopolized by that party. For almost all Rosarino politicians, the demand for a politics of principles went hand in hand with the notion that democracy should be geared toward realizing the general interest. Alcides Greca, one of the first group of Radical deputies elected to the provincial legislature, defended himself and his fellow congressmen by arguing that the attacks leveled against them did not address their ideas. In fact, Catholics and other conservatives hated him, he claimed, simply because he was a thinking person, because he proposed innovative initiatives.⁸² Just as Menchaca had claimed to represent the “collective soul,” Greca described himself as a “genuine representative of the people” and his colleagues as “the legitimate exponents of the popular will.” He argued that unlike the previous generation of politicians, who received their positions through patronage and who pursued government office only as a means of personal enrichment, democratically elected politicians would be able to generate ideas that would serve the interests of the people.⁸³

This vision of a politics of ideas raised a complex series of questions about the

role that parties were to play in the new democracy. If politicians represented the people as a whole rather than any particular sector of society, then how could they be organized into opposing parties? If there was only one national interest, then how could there be more than one political party? As an inevitable outgrowth of the rhetoric of national unity, some politicians did attempt to describe their parties as representative of the nation as a whole. Yet despite their commitment to the notion of a single, general interest, many observers found these claims illegitimate. *La Capital*, for example, attacked the UCR for describing itself as “the essence and integral patrimony of the Argentine nationality.” The nation, the paper argued, was larger than any single party.⁸⁴ But this argument hardly resolved the question of how, or in fact whether, parties ought to represent distinct sectoral interests.

Lisandro de la Torre, the founder and leader of the Liga del Sur and later the PDP, suggested in many of his writings that democratic politics did indeed entail the representation of divergent interests. Defending the Liga’s position that the provincial capital should be moved to Rosario, de la Torre demanded “equality of political representation within the Province, or in other words, representation based on the population.” This argument implied that the interests of Rosarinos differed from those of the population of the northern part of the province, and that both should be represented equally in government. More explicitly, de la Torre argued that foreigners who paid above a certain amount in taxes should be given the vote in provincial elections because “governments improve to the extent that the interests they represent increase.”⁸⁵ In other words, the more different interests were given a voice in politics, the better. But de la Torre did not extend this notion of the political representation of interests to his view of parties. He argued repeatedly that his own Liga del Sur was not a local party that represented solely the particular interests of Rosarinos, but was rather a party of principle, which stood for the ideals of free suffrage, local autonomy, and proportional representation. This argument was a self-serving one, occasioned by de la Torre’s realization that he could not win in Santa Fe with only the votes of Rosarinos. But it also reflected the firm belief that parties should represent ideas, not interests.

Enrique Thedy, another Liguista leader, declared that chief among the party’s goals was “the effective representation in government of the greatest possible sum of interests.” But, like de la Torre, he insisted that the Liga did not seek to achieve “the illegitimate goal of benefiting one determined portion of the province at the expense of the rest.” In contrast to the personalist parties that had come before, the Liguistas did not want to win elections merely in order to further their own selfish interests. Instead, what united the new party’s members, Thedy argued, was their common commitment to a set of principles.⁸⁶ *La Capital* echoed this sentiment with the

following prescription for Argentina's future: "What is most needed . . . is for similar civic aspirations to unite; for concordant desires to come together; in a word, for true organic parties to form in the country, parties with definite ideals and a solid base of fundamental principles."⁸⁷ The call for "organic parties" became almost a mantra for political observers during this period, but as this citation reveals, the term "organic" did not imply that parties should somehow reflect the social structure. Rather, according to the dominant understanding of democracy, parties should be formed by like-minded citizens, individuals who shared a common set of ideas about how to further the national interest. Even though politicians like de la Torre and Thedy believed that governments should be chosen by an electorate that contained as many different interests as possible, their vision of the political process left no room for the representation of those interests. Individuals, they hoped, would organize politically not on the basis of a common sectoral interest, but rather because they shared certain principles.

This model of "organic parties" was not easily reconciled with the dominant image of a unified, harmonious nation. De la Torre himself suggested this problem by arguing that his party was the true reflection of the popular will:

In political life the parties that make mistakes pay for their sins with the withdrawal of [popular] opinion. If the Liga del Sur were a selfish and divisive association, it would not convoke such an immense mass of people under its banners; and if the Constitutional Party were the champion of a just cause, it would attract popular collaboration.⁸⁸

This almost Rousseauian belief in the infallibility of the general will left little room for any notion of party politics. According to this reasoning, only one set of ideas—and hence only one party—could accurately reflect the national interest; all other parties must be either mistaken or selfish.

In explaining their own electoral failures, politicians were forced to confront this apparent contradiction. If a party's ideas served the national interest, then how could that party lose? Within the logic of the dominant political discourse, the only available explanation was the false consciousness of the masses. Rosarino politicians argued that a well-functioning democracy could only be achieved through a process of civic education, in which the people would gradually learn to vote wisely. As de la Torre put it, "For the time being, the people vote: now they will learn to vote well."⁸⁹ De la Torre and his contemporaries argued that voters needed to attain a certain level of *civismo* in order to exercise their rights effectively. They continually invoked this learning

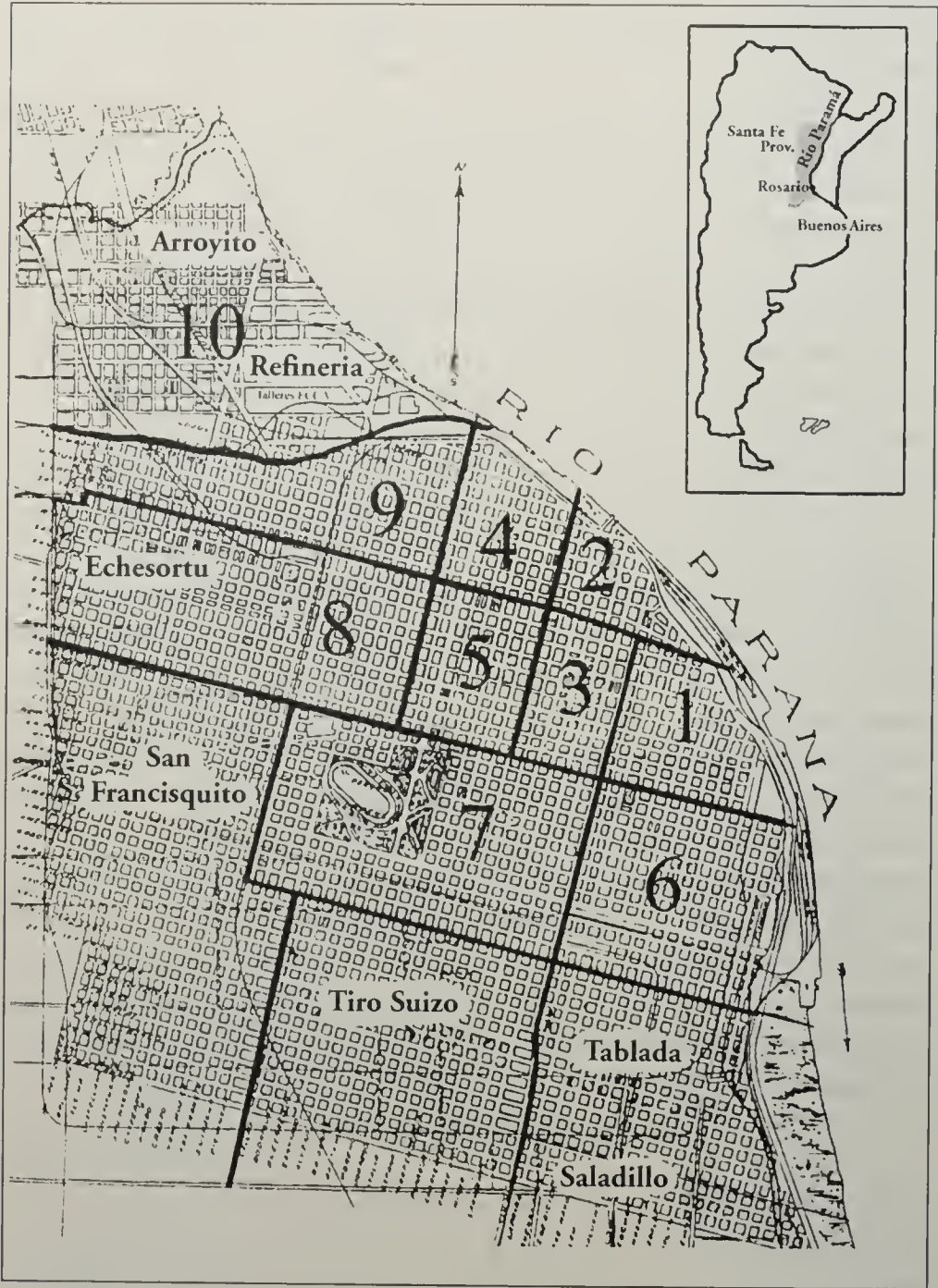
process in order to account for both political successes and disappointments. In a typical usage, one pro-Radical observer predicted success for the party in the 1914 legislative elections: "The people of this province have evolved sufficiently . . . to repudiate aristocratic pretensions."⁹⁰ Two years later, Governor Menchaca used the same logic to rationalize his faction's failure in the elections to pick his successor: "[I]nsufficient popular culture," he claimed, "makes [voters] debate people and not principles."⁹¹ In this way, politicians explained electoral defeats with the argument that the civic education process had not gone far enough; the people continued to lack the consciousness and culture that democracy and a politics of principles required.

By explaining electoral outcomes in terms of the quality of the voting public and the extent to which a capable, virtuous citizenry had emerged, Rosarino politicians hearkened back to the evolutionary logic of Alberdi and Sarmiento. Both of these thinkers thought that democracy would only be feasible in Argentina after the nation and its people had evolved to a certain point. By adopting this notion, Rosario's political elite prevented the emergence of a pluralist model of party politics. Such a model depends upon the existence of a loyal opposition, a party that opposes the majority, yet remains the legitimate representative of the people who support it. During the early years of democracy in Rosario, most politicians believed that the only legitimate political representation was that provided by a party of ideas well suited to the national interest. This function could, by logical necessity, only be performed by one party; other factions could achieve success only to the extent that the voters had not yet developed the required level of civic consciousness. Since parties could not represent particular social sectors, this notion of democracy provided no space for the legitimate representation of divergent viewpoints. Instead, politicians denigrated their opponents as the representatives of "the illiterate, irresponsible mass"⁹² or of "our 32% who do not know how to read nor write."⁹³ Although it is not out of the ordinary for politicians to insult their opponents' supporters, this particular form of attack ruled out the possibility that competent, virtuous citizens could be represented by more than one party.

The evolutionary logic that held that citizens needed to attain a certain level of civic consciousness in order to vote wisely had another serious consequence: It weakened the political elite's commitment to democracy. On this point, Jeremy Adelman's analysis of the failure of Argentina's Socialist Party during the period of electoral democracy is revealing. As Adelman demonstrates, the Socialists believed that workers would vote for their party as soon as they attained class consciousness, which in turn would happen only when capitalist economic development had run its course. In the meantime, the party could never hope to win elections, because

Argentina's incomplete bourgeois revolution meant that workers were bound to suffer from false consciousness.⁹⁴ Inevitably, some Socialists questioned the wisdom of continued participation in a formal democracy that could never bring about the required transformation in workers' consciousness. I would argue that a similar logic operated within Rosario's mainstream parties. Like the Socialists, these parties also believed that a transformation in consciousness had to occur before the masses could be expected to vote "correctly." For mainstream politicians, it was not class consciousness that voters had to develop, but civic consciousness, the ability to perceive the national interest. Still, the logic was the same: Disappointing results at the polls "proved" that the people were not ready for democracy and gave politicians a reason to doubt the wisdom of maintaining the system.

Adelman argues that the Socialists' disdain for the unconscious working-class voter diluted the party's electoral appeal. Again, Rosarino Radicals and Liguistas were vulnerable to a similar dynamic. Evolutionary logic led politicians to discount all those who voted for another party as ignorant, if not illiterate. This attitude, often verging on a crude elitism, may well have alienated some voters. But mainstream Rosarino politicians suffered most from their refusal to appeal to social class. Their opposition to the political representation of particular interests kept these politicians from specifically addressing the needs of the working class in their speeches and propaganda. They sought the votes of unselfish, patriotic citizens, rather than those of workers intent on satisfying their class interests. In a city in which a significant portion of the labor force was organized in militant, class-based unions, politicians paid a heavy price for their refusal to represent class interests. These politicians embraced a nonpluralist version of democracy in order to nationalize a population divided by class and ethnicity. Hoping to solidify their own hegemony through this nation-building project, they instead unleashed a process of contestation that would yield far-reaching and unintended consequences.



MAP 1. Rosario, 1921: Neighborhoods and Electoral Districts.
 Map from Jefatura Política-Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1921* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1922).
 Names of electoral districts derived from Héctor Nicolás Zinni,
 Barrios de Tango (Rosario: Viejo Almacén, 1997), 89-93.

CHAPTER TWO

The Limits of Social Mobility

Workers and Politicians in Rosario, 1912–1930

The 1912 electoral reform prompted Rosario's politicians to pursue a hegemonic project aimed at incorporating the masses into a modern, civilized, and nonpluralist republic. Toward this end, they addressed their audiences as undifferentiated citizens, equal members of *el pueblo*. And yet, Rosario politicians conducted this democratic experiment in the context of what was still a polarized society characterized by relatively rigid class divisions. The gospel of a unified nation and a virtuous citizenry did not reflect reality in any obvious way. On the contrary, it was preached to self-conscious, working-class voters by recognizably elite politicians. During a series of labor conflicts in the 1890s and 1900s, the city's workers had forged a class-based identity that was accepted as legitimate by most Rosarinos. A wide socioeconomic gulf separated this working class from the men who controlled the political process. Throughout the democratic period, a small group of well-educated and mostly wealthy men monopolized the highest political offices. By severely restricting opportunities for upward mobility within both the government and the party hierarchies, this elite tried to solidify its control over the production of political agendas and discourse.

A City Marked by Class: Workers and Unions in Rosario

The origins of the labor movement in Argentina predate the introduction of democracy by at least two decades. Trade unions and strikes emerged during the late nineteenth century, a byproduct of Argentina's export-led economic development, which populated the country's major cities with rapidly increasing numbers of wage-earning manual laborers. The fantastic growth of the export economy in the decades after 1880 created a burgeoning demand for skilled and unskilled labor in the transport and processing of livestock and grain, a demand filled in large part by European immigrants. Given the lack of year-round economic opportunities in the countryside and the availability of high-wage jobs in urban areas, many of these immigrants concentrated in the cities. There, they formed part of a growing domestic market, fostering the emergence of an urban economy aimed at satisfying their needs. This process, well known in the case of Buenos Aires, was equally

characteristic of economic development in Rosario, which by the turn of the century had become Argentina's second largest city.

Rosario's rapid growth and urbanization in the final decades of the nineteenth century was intimately linked to a precipitous boom in cereal production in Santa Fe Province. Between 1875 and 1895, Argentina went from importing wheat to being the world's third-largest exporter of the grain. And by the end of this period, 50 percent of the Argentine land dedicated to wheat production was located in Santa Fe.¹ Rosario, situated on the easily navigable Paraná River, served as the principal port for transporting the grain produced on these lands. The city quickly became home to railroad companies, banks, import-export houses, retail and wholesale businesses, and small industrial operations seeking to take advantage of the opportunities created by the agricultural boom. This economic development and the high wages available in Rosario attracted massive immigration to the city. Rosario's population quadrupled between 1869 and 1895, and in the latter year, 46 percent of the city's residents were foreign born.² Even though the Argentine-born children of immigrants were automatically granted citizenship, a steady flow of immigration kept the proportion of foreigners in Rosario's population high. Foreign-born immigrants accounted for 46.6 percent of the city's inhabitants in 1910³ and 45 percent as late as 1926.⁴

The workforce that resulted from export-led growth and massive immigration did not conform in any sense to the classical image of an industrial proletariat. According to Michael Johns's calculations, about 45 percent of Rosario's workers in 1910 were occupied in moving commodities, especially grain. This sector included those who worked on the railroads and at the port, operated the electric tramway and horse-drawn carts, and worked in wholesale and retail commerce. An additional 8 percent to 12 percent worked in construction, and about 25 percent, mainly women, worked in personal services. Only 15 percent of Rosarino workers were engaged in the manufacturing sector, and almost all of these worked in small workshops. In 1910, two-thirds of the 649 establishments categorized in the census as "factories" employed fewer than ten workers each. Moreover, half of the manufacturing sector worked in workshops too small to be considered factories—meaning that they had fewer than five employees.⁵ Rosario's workers were not even an exclusively urban labor force. The city's labor market was tightly integrated with that of the surrounding countryside, such that many Rosarinos migrated to work in the fields during the harvest months. Seasonal migration worked in the other direction as well, with thousands of agricultural laborers seeking jobs in Rosario during those times of the year when rural labor demand dipped.⁶

The working population of Rosario was extremely heterogeneous. Divided

ethnically among Argentines, Italians, Spaniards, and others, Rosario's workers lacked a common cultural tradition and even a common language. Moreover, the fluctuating labor market meant that many Rosarinos alternated between different sectors of the economy. A manual laborer might work in the fields during the harvest season and then return to Rosario to work as a street vender or to seek employment in the occasional public works project. Thanks to a combined and uneven process of industrial development, even those workers who did enjoy stable employment worked in a wide variety of settings. The job experiences of workers in export-related sectors, such as the railroads or the port, had little in common with those of the many workers employed in small workshops.⁷ Rosario's workers, like those in Buenos Aires, formed an internally fragmented group.⁸ And yet in both cities, workers overcame these divisions in order to forge a powerful, anarchist-led labor movement during the period from 1890 to 1910.

Seeking to explain the emergence of working-class solidarity in these conditions, historians have emphasized the predominance of immigrants within the workforce. They argue that anarchist organizers, usually foreign themselves, enjoyed linguistic and cultural affinities with lower-class immigrants. More important, anarchist ideology spoke to the immigrant workers' sense of themselves as an exploited, dispossessed group, unintegrated into the society around them.⁹ But this account does not hold for the case of Rosario, where foreign origin did not distinguish the poor from the rich. As a very recently developed city, Rosario lacked a patrician elite whose ancestral roots in Argentina predated the immigration boom of the late nineteenth century. Because the first waves of immigrants to the city encountered no previously established "native" elite, they were able to occupy that position themselves. As a result, foreigners were not concentrated at the low end of the class structure; immigrants and their offspring predominated even among the wealthiest sectors of society.¹⁰ Of the 18,493 owners of real estate in Rosario in 1910, 10,839 (59 percent) were foreign,¹¹ and Italian last names figured prominently in the memberships of the city's elite social clubs. Given the presence of foreigners within the local elite, immigrant anarchists lacked the linguistic or cultural advantages they may have enjoyed in Buenos Aires. Moreover, the various immigrant communities in Rosario maintained a degree of cross-class cohesion through thriving ethnic mutual aid societies, which provided a wide range of services for the members of these communities and often ran private schools for their children.¹² In the case of Rosario, the emergence of a successful anarchist labor movement and the consolidation of working-class identity cannot be explained by the prevalence of immigrants within the workforce.

Even though workers' foreign origins did not clearly mark them in opposition to the local elite, emerging patterns of settlement helped make class distinctions a salient

feature of Rosario social life. During the first few decades of Rosario's rapid economic development, its wealthy and poor inhabitants tended to live side by side. The absence of cheap public transportation in this period meant that workers needed to live in the city's central zones, near the potential sources of employment. Overcrowded tenement houses called *conventillos* were located on the same streets as banks, merchant houses, and even the homes of the wealthy. But this situation began to change in the late 1880s with the formation of a largely homogeneous working-class district to the north of the downtown area. The new district resulted from the establishment of two large-scale enterprises in this peripheral zone: the Argentine Sugar Refinery and the construction and wagon repair workshops of the Central Argentine Railroad (FCCA), each of which demanded a large, locally settled labor force. The resulting neighborhoods, predictably named Refinería ("Refinery") and Talleres ("Workshops"), were not only geographically marginal, but were also physically and symbolically cut off from the rest of the city by a belt of fourteen railroad tracks on which about one hundred trains passed each day. Even after an underpass was built in 1902 and the city's tramlines were electrified in 1908, the tramway still did not enter Refinería and Talleres, and travel to the downtown area remained difficult. Between 1900 and 1910 the population of this isolated, working-class district increased from nearly 12,000 to almost 35,000, by which time it accounted for 18 percent of the city's residents.¹³

The formation of Refinería and Talleres fostered the emergence of a distinct, working-class culture in Rosario. Living either in *conventillos* or in improvised shacks made of scrap metal, wood, or mud, workers in these neighborhoods inhabited a socially homogenous world, lacking almost any access to the theaters, public plazas, churches, and other institutions of the wealthier sectors of society. And yet even in the more central sections of the city where rich and poor shared a common, geographical space, the gulf between the classes was wide. It is perhaps not surprising that the northern working-class neighborhoods were frequently portrayed in the mainstream press as alien places. But even the downtown *conventillos* impressed elite observers as foreign or exotic. A report in the satirical magazine *Monos y Monadas* exemplifies this attitude. Inspired by fears of anarchist terrorism, the magazine's reporter visits a more or less centrally located *conventillo* in order to investigate the causes of unrest among the "humble and simple social stratum, which constitutes the popular class." He enters, prepared to greet the huddled masses with a mock call to liberty, but is instead surprised to find a picturesque world of "suggestive rusticity." In a gently mocking tone, the article describes what appears to be a tiny village filled with happy, if uncultured, families.¹⁴ The reporter's shocking discovery of a backward, even rural world in the heart of the city reveals the distance between the social universes of rich

and poor. Unlike contemporary articles that emphasized the squalor and immorality of working-class living conditions,¹⁵ this report presents the poor as unthreatening, even charming. The place it describes is, nonetheless, an unknown world. Rosario elites may well have lived alongside workers—in fact, many of them owned and turned a profit on the *conventillos* in which those workers lived¹⁶—but they did not know them. Both in the explicitly working-class neighborhoods of the north and in the more heterogeneous central areas, workers inhabited a social and cultural space that was clearly marked off by class distinctions.¹⁷

In this milieu, anarchist organizers achieved success in Rosario by convincing workers that disciplined unions, organized along craft lines, could bring immediate benefits at the workplace. Although labor conflict in Rosario dated at least as far back as 1888, when local railroad workers struck twice in a matter of months, trade union organization took off with the formation of the anarchist *Casa del Pueblo* in 1900.¹⁸ After a bloody uprising at the Argentine Sugar Refinery in 1901 and a partially successful general strike in response to a nationwide port workers' conflict the following year, anarchists took uncontested leadership over the local labor movement. Formed in 1902, the anarchist-led Rosario Local Workers Federation (FOLR) dominated every major labor conflict of the next decade. At the turn of the century, members of the Socialist Party also attempted to build labor organizations in the city. However, these efforts were apparently undermined by the Socialists' preference for parliamentary politics and by the less intransigent stance they tended to take in labor negotiations.¹⁹ In any case, after they opposed the call for a general strike in 1902, the Socialists seem to have been marginalized within Rosario's union movement. In response to conflicts involving the shop employees union in 1904 and the cart drivers in 1907, the FOLR anarchists were able to secure the participation of large numbers of workers in citywide general strikes.

Anarchists owed their success in Rosario not to their antistate, insurrectionary ideology, but to their commitment to practical unionism, their ability to deliver concrete benefits to the members of their organizations. Individual workers joined the union in their industry or craft in order to win wage increases or improvements in work conditions. These unions then joined the FOLR, which, in turn, affiliated with the Buenos Aires-based national anarchist organization, the Argentine Regional Workers Federation (FORA). At the level of the rank and file, however, the commitment to anarchist ideology seems to have been quite weak.²⁰ The FOLR was able to mobilize workers in general strike movements when they responded to local conflicts, as in 1904 and 1907. By contrast, in late 1907, efforts to organize a general strike in protest against the anti-anarchist Residence Law failed to generate

support among the Rosario unions. In 1909, the FOLR seemed to follow, rather than lead its members when it backed a work stoppage called by small merchants protesting a municipal tax increase. Later that year, local unions once again ignored the anarchist federation's declaration of a general strike, this time to protest the violent repression suffered by workers in Buenos Aires on May Day.²¹ The declining effectiveness of the FOLR may have been due in part to the high levels of unemployment that characterized the 1907–1912 period, but it also revealed the limits of anarchist ideology within the Rosario labor movement. Workers enthusiastically participated in strikes aimed at improving their own work conditions and, in certain circumstances, joined solidarity strikes to help their fellow workers achieve their demands. However, strike actions aimed at resisting national legislation or protesting police brutality in Buenos Aires inspired far less enthusiasm. In fact, Rosarino anarchists grew so frustrated with the rank and file's refusal to embrace insurrectionary goals that many began to argue that anarchism must broaden its appeal to sectors beyond the working class. The rise of this so-called "neoindividualist" faction helped weaken the anarchists' ties to the unions and even resulted in the temporary dissolution of the FOLR in 1910.²²

Even if anarchist ideology had only a limited impact on the majority of Rosario's workers, two decades of unionizing efforts and shop floor struggle did expose the city's laboring population to the discourse of working-class identity and interest. In its report for 1912, the Santa Fe government's statistics department listed fifty-three trade unions in Rosario as well as fifteen separate labor organizations included in the more militant category of "resistance societies." That year, the department reported fourteen strikes in the city, in which the principal demands included higher wages and a shorter workday.²³ These numbers indicate that even in this period of relative inactivity by anarchist organizers, Rosario's unions continued to pursue workplace improvements. Union organization had not extended to every sector of the labor force, and Rosarino workers continued to be fragmented along ethnic and craft lines. Nevertheless, within certain sectors—most notably, the railroad workers, stevedores, shop employees, and cart drivers—a tradition of class-based organization and struggle had established a deep-seated, working-class identity. Beyond these sectors, Rosarino workers may not have fully embraced a class-based identity to the exclusion of all others, but the language of class was certainly familiar, and its potential utility had been demonstrated.

The labor conflicts of the early twentieth century established the working class as an undeniable presence in Rosario's public life. Just as many workers now saw themselves as members of a particular social class, most local elites viewed them in

these terms as well. In fact, these elites not only acknowledged the existence and significance of class divisions, they also accepted the legitimacy of working-class interests. Ricardo Falcón's careful examination of Rosario's mainstream press during the first decade of this century reveals widespread consensus on a number of issues related to the labor movement. During this period, newspapers from across the political spectrum accepted certain strikes as legitimate, namely those that did not involve violence, were attributable to "reasonable" complaints, and were not provoked by anarchists or other "outside agitators." Although they rejected the concept of a general strike, these papers accepted that workers had the right to organize in officially recognized unions and to strike in defense of their own economic interests. Moreover, most commentators in the press also agreed that it was up to the state to forge an equilibrium between the conflicting interests of labor and capital by regulating the work process and establishing permanent conciliation mechanisms.²⁴

Within Rosario's elite circles, the movement for pro-labor social reform had its most ardent proponent in the lawyer, doctor, and businessman, Juan Biale Massé. The Spanish-born Biale Massé served as lawyer to Rosario's Bolsa de Comercio, a corporate organization whose members included Rosario's wealthiest merchants and landowners. From this position, he tried to convince local elites that the state needed to regulate work conditions and arbitrate labor conflicts. Biale Massé is best known as the author of a four-hundred-page report on the work and living conditions of workers throughout Argentina. The report, published in 1904, described a world of hardship characterized by low wages, long hours, alcoholism, and cruel treatment by bosses. It called for a series of pro-labor legislative reforms including a minimum wage, the eight-hour day, protections for women and children in the labor force, and work accident insurance.²⁵ In Rosario, Biale Massé became an outspoken defender of workers' organizations and served as an occasional advisor to the local stevedore and shop employee unions.²⁶

Biale Massé and others succeeded in convincing most Rosarino elites of the need for fair, negotiated settlements of labor conflicts. As unionization spread and a series of strikes threatened the city's commercial interests, the Bolsa de Comercio began to take an active interest in the "labor question." Between 1901 and 1907, the Cámara Sindical, a subdivision of the Bolsa, offered its intervention in most of Rosario's major strikes. Under the influence of Biale Massé and the wealthy merchant Juan B. Quintana, the Cámara proposed compromise solutions that generally acknowledged the justice of at least some of the workers' demands. Moreover, the Cámara's leaders argued for the establishment of permanent "arbitration

tribunals," which would include representatives of both management and labor, with the president of the Cámara Sindical itself to serve in a tiebreaking capacity.²⁷

Although efforts to impose this model of conflict mediation met with only limited success, they reflected a widespread, if reluctant, acceptance by Rosarino elites of working-class organization and protest. Rosario's wealthiest merchants, like the city's newspaper writers, acknowledged the existence of the working class as well as the legitimacy of many of its demands. The spectacle of an organized labor movement actively defending working-class interests had helped convince elites of the existence of class divisions. In turn, this elite recognition reinforced workers' sense of themselves as members of a distinct social class.

Restricted Access: The Social Composition of Rosario's Political Elite

For the working class that had emerged in Rosario during the previous decades, the democratic political system installed in 1912 did not create significant opportunities for upward mobility. In this sense, the evidence from Rosario seems to contradict much of the scholarship on democratic politics in this period. According to this literature, the electoral reform opened the political system to the participation of subordinate groups. While the party leaderships were dominated by elites at the beginning of the period, scholars have identified a trend toward upward mobility during the 1920s, particularly within the UCR. They argue that an increasing number of legislators were drawn from the "middle sectors," while lower levels of the party apparatuses provided opportunities for others.²⁸ This mobility within the political arena has even been invoked to account for the Argentine elite's growing dissatisfaction with the democratic experiment and, indirectly, for the coup that ended it.²⁹ But in Rosario, democracy enabled only a very limited process of social mobility. Both the Radical party and the Liga del Sur, the parties that came to dominate Rosarino politics during the democratic period, provided some space for groups that had not been represented in the old, oligarchic political system.³⁰ Nevertheless, positions of power in government and in the party hierarchies were monopolized by a small political elite, which although not identical to the city's economic elite, overlapped extensively with it. Moreover, democracy itself did little to loosen this elite's control over the political system. Between 1912 and 1930, very few people from outside Rosario's elite circles were able to attain significant political power or to pose any real challenge to those who dominated the party leaderships.

Table 1. Elite Club Membership Among Rosario Politicians, 1912-1930

	NATIONAL DEPUTIES	PROVINCIAL DEPUTIES	MAYORS	POLICE CHIEFS	CITY COUNCILMEN
Total	33	41	21	15	204
Members of elite clubs	26	23	19	8	117
Percentage of elites	79%	56%	90%	53%	57%

Sources: Diego Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia Argentina*, vol. 7 (Buenos Aires: Ediar, 1961), 248; Cámara de Diputados de la Nación, *Nómina de diputados de la nación por distrito electoral: Período 1854-1991* (Buenos Aires: Secretaría Parlamentaria, 1991); Municipalidad de Rosario, *Los intendentes, comisionados e interventores en la municipalidad de Rosario* (Rosario, n.d.); Municipalidad de Rosario, *Nómina de los señores que han formado parte del Consejo Deliberante, Consejo Ejecutor y Comisiones Administradoras desde 1873 hasta la fecha* (Rosario, n.d.); Santa Fe Cámara de Diputados, *Diario de Sesiones, 1912-1930*; Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memorias*, 1907, 1911, 1916, 1917, 1920, 1924, 1926, and 1928; *Club Social de Rosario, Memoria: Año 1929-1930*; Jockey Club Rosario, *Memorias*, 1907, 1913, 1917, 1921, and 1923; and Sociedad Rural de Rosario, *Cincuentenario de su fundación: Síntesis histórica de la Sociedad Rural de Rosario* (Rosario: La Prensa S.R.R.), 1945.

Drawing on evidence from 1910 and earlier, Michael Johns has shown that Rosario’s “ruling class” was far more politically active than its counterpart in other Argentine cities. He concludes that over half of the city’s economic elite participated actively in local politics in this period.³¹ My findings suggest that this pattern of extensive elite participation continued in the democratic era. Between 1912 and 1930, thirty-three Rosarinos were elected to serve as deputies in the Argentine Congress.³² I have analyzed this group, using membership in such exclusive institutions as the Jockey Club, Club Social, Sociedad Rural, and Bolsa de Comercio as a proxy for elite status. The results show that twenty-six of the thirty-three deputies, or 79 percent, belonged to one or more of these social clubs. Applying this same criterion to the provincial legislature reveals that a smaller, though still sizable, majority of those elected at this level were elites. Of the forty-one men elected to represent Rosario in the provincial chamber of deputies between 1912 and 1926, twenty-three, or 56 percent, were members of at least one of the elite organizations (see table 1). As in earlier periods, the small group of Rosarino men who ascended to the highest political positions belonged in large part to the city’s upper crust.

Using membership in social clubs as proof of elite status is, of course, problematic. Jockey Club membership, for example, was not necessarily limited to the economic upper class. Moreover, as some scholars have suggested, success in politics may itself have bestowed enough prestige to facilitate club membership.³³ However, I have

been able to establish that membership in elite social clubs preceded political election for the majority of Rosarino legislators, both at the national and provincial levels.³⁴ Most politicians accumulated a substantial degree of social prestige before they achieved success in their political careers. And in most cases this prestige seems to have coincided with economic wealth. Certainly this was the perception of most commentators at the time. The Jockey Club was seen to represent a "cultured and select sociability," and was housed in a "sumptuous and very elegant mansion."³⁵ More to the point, in opposing the tax exemption for the Club's horse racing activities, one provincial senator (not a Jockey Club member) expressed the widely held view of the Jockey Club as a rich man's organization:

One has to take into account that we are not speaking of poor institutions, but rather the contrary, because the Jockey Clubs are constituted by people of money and its coffers are stuffed with the contributions of the poor people who leave their cents in the racetrack receipts.³⁶

The majority of the Senate rejected this argument, yet no one quibbled with the depiction of the Jockey Club's members as "people of money." Membership in this and other exclusive social clubs can be taken as a suggestive, if not conclusive, indicator of economic elite status.

A closer look at the data on the provincial and national legislatures reveals that elite dominance varied slightly according to party. Existing studies of upper-level politicians in Argentina during this period have found that the Radical party was less elite than its competition,³⁷ and the data on Rosario do corroborate this finding. During the period, the Santa Fe Radicals split several times into distinct parties that competed against each other in elections. Yet in terms of their social composition, these parties differed only slightly, at least at the legislative level. A somewhat more significant contrast is apparent in the case of the principal non-Radical party in the province, Lisandro de la Torre's Liga del Sur, transformed into the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) in 1915. In comparison to the Radicals, a higher proportion of Liguista and PDP legislators belonged to elite social clubs. Of the nine national deputies representing the Liga or the PDP, eight (89 percent) were elites, whereas seventeen of the twenty-three Radical congressmen (74 percent) had this status. In the provincial legislature, the contrast was more marked: Elite club members represented two-thirds (ten of fifteen) of the PDP members and only one-half (thirteen of twenty-six) of the Radicals.³⁸

The Liga del Sur was founded in 1908 by Radical leaders frustrated with

the party's inability to pursue their concrete local demands. Based in the southern part of the province, and especially in Rosario, the Liguistas opposed the monopolization of political power by northern groups in and around the city of Santa Fe, the provincial capital. The party's platform, which called for the enfranchisement of foreigners, the transfer of the provincial capital from Rosario to Santa Fe, and the reduction of taxes, appealed to important sectors of Rosario's commercial elite as well as to agricultural colonists from the surrounding countryside.³⁹ Given these social bases, it is perhaps not surprising that PDP legislators were drawn more heavily from the upper class. But the difference should not be exaggerated, because elites represented a majority even among Radical legislators. Moreover, since the PDP never controlled the provincial government during the period and was always a legislative minority, the party had fewer high political positions to fill. It is possible that more "nonelites" would have ascended to high positions within the PDP had more of these slots been available.

In any case, the various Radical parties had no shortage of elite members, a fact that becomes clear when we consider Rosario's municipal government. The Radicals' control of the provincial executive throughout the democratic period gave them the power to place their own men in two important appointed positions: the mayor (*intendente*) and the chief of police (*jefe político*).⁴⁰ The Radicals who filled these positions were overwhelmingly of elite backgrounds. Of the twenty-one men appointed mayor during the 1912-1930 period, nineteen (90 percent) belonged to Rosario's exclusive social clubs. Eight of the fifteen police chiefs (53 percent) had such club memberships (see table 1), but this number is misleadingly low. At least one of the appointees was not from Rosario; he belonged to elite organizations in other parts of Santa Fe. Another of the "nonelite" police chiefs was an army colonel, while still another was the nephew of the governor who appointed him. At this level of politics, the socioeconomic elite dominated both parties.

In addition to the appointed offices of mayor and police chief, Rosario's city government also included a city council (*concejo deliberante*), elected according to very different rules than those governing provincial and national elections. While the political reforms of 1912 extended the vote to all male Argentine adults, a restricted electorate continued to function at the municipal level until 1928. Elections for city councilmen were open to Argentines who had resided in Rosario for at least one year and who paid municipal taxes. In addition, foreigners with two years of residence and who paid a certain amount in annual taxes could also vote.⁴¹ Although a 1912 decree made registration and voting obligatory for those eligible, the nature of the registration process as well as the tax-paying requirement kept turnouts in municipal elections

low.⁴² While the number of Rosarino voters in provincial elections climbed steadily from 15,828 in 1912 to 48,887 in 1928, municipal turnouts never surpassed 8,000 and were often closer to 3,000. The enfranchisement of foreigners and the restrictive nature of the electoral system meant that this tiny electorate was by no means a microcosm of the larger provincial voting population. As a result, despite Radical dominance at the provincial level, the Liga del Sur and PDP controlled the majority of the Rosario city council throughout the period. However, if the council differed from the provincial and national legislatures in terms of who voted for it and which party controlled it, the socioeconomic backgrounds of its members were quite similar. Of the 166 different men who were elected to the council between 1912 and 1928, 106, or 64 percent, belonged to elite social clubs.⁴³ The data suggest that both parties' representatives on the council included some men who belonged to elite clubs and others who did not. Taken together with the evidence from the national Congress, the provincial legislature, and the highest appointed municipal positions, these results demonstrate that elites represented a clear majority among Rosario's most powerful politicians, regardless of party.⁴⁴

The extent of this elite dominance at the highest level of politics did not vary significantly during the period. Considering the composition of the legislatures over time reveals that the proportion of elite club members remained roughly constant. Of the seven national deputies who did not belong to elite social clubs, four began their terms between 1912 and 1920. Likewise, eleven of the eighteen "nonelite" provincial deputies were elected in this early phase. Since the proportion of elite club members in the legislatures did not significantly decrease during the 1920s, the notion that the economic elite steadily lost control over politics in these years does not hold for the case of Rosario. Still, from the onset of democracy in 1912 to its breakdown in 1930, a significant minority of Rosarino politicians did not belong to the city's exclusive clubs. Who made up this minority? Did they represent subordinate socioeconomic groups newly empowered by democratic politics?

An examination of the provincial and national legislators who did not belong to elite social clubs reveals that the single largest group among them was made up of university-trained professionals. Of the twenty-three "nonelites" in the two legislatures, at least five were lawyers, two were medical doctors, and one was a civil engineer. In addition to their political careers, many of these professionals worked as university professors. In several cases, their academic specializations gave them an expertise that was directly relevant to politics. The Radical congressman Juan Luis Ferrarotti, for example, taught finances at the Economic, Commercial and Political Sciences school of the Universidad Nacional del Litoral.⁴⁵ Another Radical lawyer,

Alcides Greca, taught the administrative law class at the University's School of Juridical and Social Sciences. His colleague in charge of the school's introductory course, José Lo Valvo, served as a provincial deputy for the PDP.⁴⁶

Within the academic world, these professionals often achieved equal or higher status than those politicians who enjoyed the privileges of Jockey Club membership. During Ferrarotti's term as vice dean of the economics school, for example, three politicians with elite club memberships served below him in the university administration.⁴⁷ The ability of some professionals and academics to join exclusive social clubs while others (assuming they would have liked to) could not may have reflected the prestige connected to the family name. Germán Cogorno studied medicine at the University of Buenos Aires, became a city councilman for the Liga del Sur, and served as an active member of the Jockey Club and Club Social. Bernardo Dell'Oro, who studied at the same medical school, published several medical texts and was elected provincial deputy as an Yrigoyenista Radical, belonged to none of the elite clubs. The difference may well have been what one source describes as Cogorno's "traditional last name."⁴⁸ But even if Cogorno's membership in a traditional family afforded him a higher level of prestige, Dell'Oro seems to have enjoyed substantially the same opportunities in life.

As Dell'Oro's biography suggests, a university education could be at least as helpful in attaining political power as the status provided by membership in the Jockey Club. In fact, the trappings of intellectuality provided by advanced education often proved essential to furthering a political career. Several of Rosario's top politicians built a reputation as intellectuals, writing regularly in the city's partisan newspapers in order to help shape public discourse on politics. The lawyer, professor, and politician Alcides Greca wrote political articles in *La Capital*, in addition to his many other publications, while José Guillermo Bertotto, who represented the PDP in both the provincial and national legislatures, wrote for various papers before founding *La Acción* in 1919 and *Democracia* in 1925.⁴⁹ Bertotto was one of Rosario's most prolific political commentators and used his position as a newspaper editor to promote first the PDP and later the Yrigoyenistas. The importance of intellectuals in politics, however, was not entirely a result of Argentina's transition to democracy. Eduardo Zimmermann has demonstrated the extensive influence of what he labels an "administrative intelligentsia" on the political reformism of the turn of the century. The growing professionalization of government after 1880 led to the increased participation of intellectuals and academic experts—lawyers, doctors, and often university professors.⁵⁰ My findings on Rosario suggest that this pattern continued after 1912. The presence of academics and professionals in

high political office did not reflect the empowerment of previously disenfranchised social sectors. It was rather the continuation of a trend that was well under way before the onset of democracy.

Within the context of Rosarino society, a university education was not an avenue to upward mobility, so much as a barrier that separated a small, privileged sector from the majority of the population. In 1912, 22 percent of Rosario's school-age children received no formal instruction at all.⁵¹ As late as 1926, fewer than one in three native-born men had received any high school education. That same year, out of a total male population of 210,421, only 1,127 men had received the education necessary to practice law or medicine.⁵² For all but a tiny percentage of Rosarinos, an advanced degree was simply out of the question. Until the founding of the Universidad del Litoral in 1919, Rosario did not even have a university. As a result, most of the city's elite families sent their children to study at the major universities in either Buenos Aires or Córdoba, an opportunity that clearly would not have been available to families of moderate means. After 1918, the Argentine university reform movement began to make advanced education available to a broader cross-section of society, but this change occurred slowly.⁵³ While it is undeniable that attending university allowed some Rosarinos to attain a higher level of social and economic status than their parents, this mobility was not the norm in the period before 1930.

For the most part, either economic elite status or a university education was required in order to acquire a position of political power. The few men who did succeed in politics without the benefit of either were the exception that proved the rule. Of this group, Jorge Raúl Rodríguez is perhaps the clearest case. After studying for only one year at Rosario's vocational business school (Escuela de Comercio), he went to work as a traveling salesman. With the Radicals' victory in 1912, he was named secretary under the newly appointed chief of police. When his boss was promoted to minister of government in 1914, Rodríguez became police chief at the tender age of twenty-three. Two years later, he was elected to the national Congress, where he served until his early death in 1929. Rodríguez, then, was a member of the middle sectors who was able to climb to the highest rungs of the political career ladder and, in the course of that ascent, to significantly improve his social status. Not coincidentally, his membership in the Jockey Club in 1917 came after his initial successes in politics. Nevertheless, Rodríguez's life story was hardly typical of politicians. Almost all biographical accounts make a point of describing him as a "self-taught man [*autodidacto*]," an avid reader who had become a man of culture and an excellent public speaker.⁵⁴ In the context of Rosario's low levels of school attendance, it seems strange to describe Rodríguez, who had been through several

years of schooling, as self-taught. But in a political milieu dominated by highly educated intellectuals, a person who had only advanced one year beyond primary school was an unusual case. In order to be accepted into the political elite, Rodríguez had to demonstrate the “culture” that he would have attained at the university. In so doing, he distinguished himself clearly from the bulk of the popular classes.

Although university-trained intellectuals were far more prominent, Rodríguez was not the only politician to emerge from a less elite background. At the municipal level, the appearance of these politicians was often the result of open alliances between the major parties and certain organized groups of merchants. Throughout the period, the PDP maintained a close relationship with the Centro Unión de Almaceneros (CUA), the city’s most important group of retailers. The PDP list for city council elections normally contained one candidate nominated by the CUA, and at least fifteen Rosarino councilmen served at one time or another on the Centro’s board of directors. The Radicals forged similar alliances with butchers, vegetable market owners, and other merchant groups. In most cases, these shopkeepers did not attain the status necessary to join elite social clubs.⁵⁵ Within municipal government, then, a substantial group of nonelites ascended to positions of power as representatives of specific sectoral interests. They sought to use their influence on the city council to benefit the merchant groups they represented. Ironically, it was the restrictive, relatively undemocratic electoral system in place at the municipal level that facilitated this sectoral representation.

This type of open alliance between parties and trade groups occurred only for municipal elections. Candidates for provincial or national office were generated exclusively by the party machinery, a process that, as I have argued, tended to restrict political officeholding to economic elites and university-trained professionals. However, the political committees through which the parties recruited supporters were staffed by a significantly more plebeian crowd. Since each party had at least one committee in each of Rosario’s ten electoral districts as well as in the surrounding suburban areas, they could not possibly fill all the administrative positions with wealthy businessmen or university-educated intellectuals. As a result, it was at the committee level more than anywhere else that subordinate social groups were incorporated into democratic politics. In February 1914, twenty Liga del Sur committees sent a total of seventy delegates to the party’s Rosario convention.⁵⁶ Using club membership as an indicator, I can ascribe elite status to only twenty-three of these men, or 33 percent. Similarly, in 1916, seven of twenty-four PDP committee presidents, or 29 percent, belonged to the city’s exclusive clubs.⁵⁷ True to the pattern established in the legislatures, Radical committees tended to be even less elite. In

May 1919, the opposition Radical party named sixty-three men to reorganize and head up committees in the city's various electoral districts.⁵⁸ Only twelve of these, or 19 percent, were elite club members. These numbers suggest that members of subordinate sectors found extensive opportunities for political participation at the committee level.

A closer look at the committees reveals that the participation of elites was largely concentrated in the city's more central electoral districts. In the case of the 1914 Liguista delegates, the youth committee and the committees for sections one through six accounted for 78 percent of the exclusive club members. For the Radicals of 1919, this concentration was more extreme: Sections two through six and the youth committee accounted for all of the elites. The most plausible explanation for this distribution is that committee leaders were recruited locally. In the more central sections of the city, where the upper-class residential areas were located, political committees had more elite leaderships. The composition of political committees in section ten, composed of the northern barrios Refinería and Talleres, the most concentrated working-class neighborhoods in Rosario, provides additional corroboration for this hypothesis. Neither the Liga in 1914 nor the Radicals in 1919 had any elite club members among their delegates from section ten. This pattern held true for later years as well. No economic elites served on the PDP section ten committees of 1916 and 1919 nor on that of the opposition Radicals in 1918.⁵⁹

In a few cases, men who began their political activity in the less exclusive parts of town were able to ascend to positions of power. PDP city councilmen Hipólito Zubía and Manuel Dall'Orso were both shop owners affiliated with the CUA and based in section ten. Dall'Orso held a position on the Liga's committee in that section as early as 1914. Still, since he had joined the city council two years earlier as a result of the Liga's alliance with the CUA, his already-acquired political status may have facilitated his entrance into committee politics, and not vice versa. Two other cases perhaps better exemplify the possibility of upward mobility within the political sphere. Darío Martínez Cuitiño served on the PDP's section nine committee in 1916, becoming its president in April of that year. Although less homogenous than its neighbor to the north, section nine was also considered a heavily working-class area. Martínez Cuitiño was nominated to be a PDP candidate for provincial deputy in 1918. He lost the internal election but went on to serve as secretary of the departmental committee, the party's highest body within Rosario. Serving another term as president of the section nine committee, he finally won the nomination and then the general election for deputy and began his term as a provincial legislator in 1920. Martín Elizalde served on section ten committees for the Liga del Sur in

1914 and for the PDP in 1916. Although he never reached the legislature, Elizalde did gain a position on the departmental committee.⁶⁰

The careers of Martínez Cuitiño and Elizalde demonstrate that the democratic political system did provide some opportunities for advancement.⁶¹ Men from the more plebeian areas of Rosario were at times able to reach important positions within the party hierarchy and even to ascend to high political office. However, the significance of this finding should not be overstated. That Martínez Cuitiño and Elizalde were based in sections nine and ten does not necessarily mean that they were of lower-class backgrounds. Elizalde, for one, may well have been a shop owner like Zubía and Dall'Orso. His association with several CUA members suggests as much.⁶² More important, the political trajectories of Martínez Cuitiño and Elizalde were exceptional in the world of Rosario politics. Out of all of the men who served in leadership positions on the Liga and PDP committees in section ten between 1912 and 1919, Elizalde and Dall'Orso are the only cases I have discovered of advancement either to a higher position within the party structure or to elected office.⁶³ Like Martínez Cuitiño, Agustín Repetto served on section nine committees and became a provincial legislator (as well as a city councilman). But the owner of a metallurgical factory and a member of the Jockey Club, Repetto was hardly of plebeian origins.⁶⁴

Because of their slightly less elite composition, the Radical parties might be expected to have provided more opportunities for upward mobility. But although less information is available on the composition of Radical committees, it appears that opportunities for advancement were almost as limited as they were in the PDP. In fact, in some cases local "nonelites" were not even able to attain the top positions in the outlying Radical committees. In 1923, the elite congressman and former mayor Miguel Culaciati served as president of the section nine committee for one of the two Radical opposition parties.⁶⁵ Likewise, in 1928, the representatives from the ninth and tenth sections to the Yrigoyenista convention included Carlos Neumayer, a member of the Bolsa de Comercio, and Elías de la Puente, a medical doctor, former provincial deputy and future vice governor.⁶⁶ These examples suggest that Radical authorities often exercised a top-down control over the party hierarchy, a technique that may well have constricted the avenues for advancement within the political structure.

The single biggest impediment to upward mobility within the political system was the monopoly of the highest positions by a relatively small group of men. Even if some political outsiders were able to advance within the party hierarchies, the names of the top officeholders in the various Radical parties revealed a marked continuity throughout the period. Those in high positions at the onset of democracy tended to maintain their power. Of the eleven men who served as Rosarino delegates to the Radicals'

provincial convention in 1912, three eventually served in the provincial legislature, three became national congressmen, and two served as minister of government, usually the most important of the provincial cabinet positions. These same men also accounted for one of Rosario's mayors, one police chief, and a departmental committee president.⁶⁷ Throughout the period, the highest positions within the party structures were controlled by the same group of established politicians. Of the six men elected to the top spots on the so-called Dissident Radicals' departmental committee in 1917, five were currently serving in the provincial or national legislatures. The sixth had already served a term on the city council and would be appointed mayor in 1918.⁶⁸ Likewise, the eleven Rosarino delegates to the provincial Yrigoyenista convention in 1928 included five former or current national congressmen, one future deputy, and a longtime Radical party leader.⁶⁹ With so few legislative positions available, the high degree of overlap between congressmen and party authorities indicates the tight control that a restricted group of men managed to maintain over the upper echelons of the political system. This same phenomenon is apparent in the PDP leadership, in which names such as Bordabehere, Correa, and Thedy recurred throughout the period.

To a great extent, the men in power at the highest levels of the party hierarchies were able to set the political agenda for those who occupied subordinate positions. This control over political programs and discourse was particularly apparent in the electoral campaigns for provincial and national offices. During these campaigns, the party committees throughout the city organized rallies and other public events in their districts, publicizing them in the newspapers, but also by door-to-door campaigning and poster hanging. Typically, the speakers at these rallies included the local committee president accompanied by some of the candidates for office and several of the leading figures in the party. An examination of the campaign event listings in the newspapers reveals that almost all the rallies featured speakers drawn from the same small group of political heavyweights. In the final two weeks of the 1918 campaign, for example, José Guillermo Bertotto spoke at no fewer than twelve PDP rallies, while Radical Deputy Juan Luis Ferrarotti appeared at thirteen campaign events.⁷⁰ These party leaders used the committee structure as a means of getting their message to potential voters throughout the city. Local committee authorities provided grassroots publicity for events at which a centrally produced party discourse was disseminated. A similar centralizing effect was also produced by the parties' periodic "reorganizations," in which authorities elected at departmental committee meetings were charged with establishing new committees in the city's electoral districts. Both of these mechanisms limited the ability of upwardly mobile outsiders to influence the content of democratic politics.

Politics in Rosario was characterized by what Pierre Bourdieu has described as “the monopoly of the professionals.” In such a situation, political power is restricted to those with significant amounts of leisure time and cultural capital. Denied access to the means of political production, the masses of ordinary individuals are mere consumers who must choose between the political products on offer.⁷¹ Even though some of Rosario’s nonelites did manage to ascend the political ranks, the bulk of the population remained dispossessed in Bourdieu’s generic sense. The lack of a university education, among other cultural and economic resources, prevented most Rosarinos from occupying high positions in either the government or the party hierarchies. Those who overcame that obstacle usually had their power and influence limited by the monopoly control that the political elite held over the highest positions as well as by the centralizing strategies of that elite. As a result, the implementation of electoral democracy in Rosario did not substantially weaken the political elite’s control over the process. These elite politicians embraced the rhetoric of virile, virtuous citizens and principled parties in the hopes of winning workers’ votes while preventing dangerous class interests from degrading the political process and threatening elite hegemony. But even though they were shut out of the corridors of power, Rosario’s workers would find a certain agency in their new role as political consumers. The logic of electoral democracy opened up new possibilities for working-class political identity, possibilities that workers proved quite capable of exploiting.

CHAPTER THREE

Appealing to Workers

Criollista Nationalism and Class Conflict, 1912-1913

Beginning in 1912, Rosario's politicians attempted to turn the city's workers into a de-classed citizenry well suited to a nonpluralist, elite-led democracy. Working-class identity, however, was not so easily erased. From the start of the democratic period, one renegade political faction exploited the contradiction between a democracy premised on a unitary political nation and the widely acknowledged persistence of class divisions. Led by Ricardo Caballero, a high-profile member of the UCR, this Rosario-based faction attempted to capitalize electorally on the existence of a self-conscious working class. Caballerista discourse constructed an alternative political identity in which membership in the working class gave voters a particularly privileged claim to citizenship.¹ Drawing extensively on the images and symbols of contemporary popular culture, Caballero and his followers attacked wealthy politicians and foreign interests, presenting themselves as the political defenders of "authentic" Argentine workers. Caballerismo combined a defense of labor with nostalgia for the masculine heroics of the gauchos of Argentina's rural past. By depicting workers as the true repositories of Argentine national identity, these politicians appealed both to the assimilationist desires of Rosario's sons of immigrants and to their persistent feelings of working-class solidarity. In essence, Caballero offered workers an alternative model of political representation, one that defined Argentine citizenship and national identity in class terms.

This chapter examines the political appeal of Caballerismo both for "native" workers and for the sons of immigrants, as well as the threat this form of class politics posed for the majority of Rosarino politicians. Caballerista discourse challenged the dominant ideal of nonsectoral political representation by invoking ethnic, national, and gender identities in ways that accentuated class distinctions. This discursive innovation first appeared during the campaign leading up to the 1912 election, but it assumed ominous proportions the following year when a series of violent labor conflicts convinced many of Rosario's politicians that Caballerismo would undermine the unifying potential of democratic politics. The struggle that erupted in these years—both a struggle over the political identity of Rosario's

worker/citizens and a contest between two competing visions of Argentine national identity—would dominate politics throughout the democratic period. Would workers be incorporated into democratic politics as citizens without class interests, or would their membership in a particular social class form the basis of their new political identity?

Appealing to Class: Ricardo Caballero's Defense of the Workers

In the 1912 provincial election, four parties competed for the support of Rosarino voters. Remnants of Santa Fe's old, conservative parties forged a new alliance called *La Coalición*. On the other end of the political spectrum, the Buenos Aires-based Socialist Party decided to participate even though it lacked a significant following in Rosario. These parties confronted two newcomers to electoral politics: the *Liga del Sur* and the *Unión Cívica Radical*. In addition to its demand that the provincial capital be moved to Rosario, the *Liga* backed a specific platform of constitutional reforms, including municipal autonomy, elections for justices of the peace and school boards, proportional and minority representation in legislative elections, lifetime terms for judges, and the extension of suffrage rights to property-owning foreigners. For their part, the Radicals had long attacked the oligarchic regime for its reliance on electoral fraud. In 1912, the party responded to the passage of the Sáenz Peña Law by ending its long-held policy of abstention and participating in the Santa Fe election. True to their traditions, the Radicals offered vague promises of moral regeneration and democratic advances instead of any specific program of reforms.

Liguistas and Radicals alike realized that victory in the election depended upon their ability to appeal to the new voters, many of whom were workers. In July 1911, nine months before the election, the *Liga del Sur* established a political committee in the working-class neighborhood of *Refinería*, while the Radical party opened one among workers in the city's *Matadero* section, named for its proximity to the slaughterhouses.² These organizing efforts met with some success. One sympathetic source claimed that more than three hundred people showed up when the *Liga*'s *Refinería* committee held elections for delegates to the party's convention in March.³ Likewise, the Radical *Leandro N. Alem Club*, with its headquarters near the northern working-class district, managed to recruit over four hundred men to march in the party's demonstration of 31 July 1911.⁴ But even though they actively pursued the votes of enfranchised workers, most Radicals and Liguistas did not appeal to class interests. Instead, they employed a universalist rhetoric, which constituted the electorate as a united, homogenous *pueblo*. The politicians who employed this language engaged in a sort of willful blindness: In neighborhoods such as *Refinería*, they recognized

their audience as working class, yet they willed that image away in order to address potential voters in the de-classed terminology of citizenship.

However, one faction within the local Radical party refused to overlook class. Led by Ricardo Caballero, these politicians recognized the possibility of using working-class identity in order to build a base of electoral support. The Caballeristas employed a gendered and ethnically coded discourse in order to pursue the votes of class-conscious workers. By identifying workers as both real men and true Argentines, they constructed an alternative political identity, grounding their notion of citizenship in a preexisting class identity.

Although champions of the working class, Caballerista politicians were not a particularly plebeian group. Caballero's followers included such men as Francisco Capmany, a wealthy real estate dealer and member of both the Bolsa de Comercio and the Jockey Club, and Julio Bello, a civil engineer and the director of Rosario's business school (*Escuela Nacional de Comercio*). Moreover, Caballero himself was an established physician, a medical school professor, and a longtime member of the Jockey Club. Still, several Caballeristas enjoyed affiliations with specific union groups, affiliations that would have been atypical among the leaders of Rosario's other political factions. The provincial deputy and later mayor of Rosario, Tobías Arribillaga, began his public career as the president of the *Unión Dependientes de Comercio*, a retail shop workers' union, while Domingo Cabanillas was a member of the teachers' union even as he served in the provincial legislature. Cabanillas used his position to promote legislation that would favor teachers.⁵ Likewise, Caballero himself enjoyed extensive contacts with several of Rosario's labor organizations. These affiliations suggested an alternative approach to democracy, one that saw the emerging political game as an opportunity to build an electoral base of support among the newly enfranchised working class.

Long before the 1912 political campaign, Caballero had developed a reputation as an outspoken advocate for workers. Born and educated in the neighboring province of Córdoba, he had participated in anarchist intellectual groups as a medical student. Around the time of his relocation to Rosario in the early years of the twentieth century, Caballero converted to Radicalism even as he retained his allegiance to the labor movement. In 1904, he appeared as the invited guest of the shop employees union at a public conference on the need for a Sunday rest law. According to the description in the press, Caballero's speech on this occasion was "a defense of the workers," in which he argued that improved working conditions were required by "a well-understood humanity, counseled by an honorable concept of justice."⁶ Later that same year, he published an angry diatribe in response to the murder of a young

worker by a member of the Rosario police's "security squadron." Caballero railed at the failure of Rosarinos to respond to this injustice: "What kind of people are these . . . who, unmoved, permit the murder of their workers?" Caballero emerged as a major figure within the Radical party during the ill-fated revolt of 1905. The last of the Radical party's attempts to overthrow the national government by force, the 1905 uprising failed to attract the support of the army's high command and ended in dismal failure. Although the Radicals concentrated most of their efforts on swaying the military, the party, at least in Rosario, did make some limited attempts to win over the organized working class.⁸ By his own account, Caballero played a key role in these efforts.⁹

After the defeat of the 1905 revolt, Caballero helped lead the process of party reorganization in Rosario, recruiting members and opening committees in preparation for another insurrectionary movement.¹⁰ During these years, he began to construct a vision of democracy that stood in stark contrast to the one promoted by the majority of Rosarino politicians. To be sure, Caballero employed many of the standard images of Radical rhetoric, trumpeting the "cause" of democracy and stressing the need to wrest political power from the corrupt and morally bankrupt oligarchy. But Caballero pushed this rhetoric in new directions. Based on a specific reading of Argentine history, his attacks on the government explicitly linked the struggle for democracy with the struggle to improve the lot of workers.

In October 1906, Caballero gave the opening address at the inauguration of the Radicals' central committee in Rosario.¹¹ He used the occasion to present his interpretation of Argentine history and nationality and to espouse a vision of democracy that would favor the working masses. Caballero argued that Argentina's true, democratic spirit thrived in the period before 1880. He praised the violent caudillos of the early nineteenth century for their heroism, describing Rosas and Facundo, the principal targets of Sarmiento's attacks, as "Shakespearean characters" who were willing to fight for an ideal. In his description of the long civil wars in which the Unitarians of Buenos Aires sought to crush the Federalist strongmen of the countryside, Caballero located masculinity on the side of the rural caudillos. Regional leaders like Facundo represented "those virile countrysides, so often bloodied by the implacable Unitarian tyranny of the cities." This early period in Argentine history constituted the "ideal period of our democracy" because men struggled valiantly and were willing to die for "the love of liberty."

According to Caballero's nostalgic vision, all of these "native virtues"—bravery, manliness, and the willingness to sacrifice for an ideal—began to disappear in 1880, destroyed, paradoxically, by economic growth. This so-called progress brought

material prosperity for the oligarchy, even as it uprooted the poor *criollo* masses and depressed their standard of living. In Caballero's view, these changes threatened the national character: "[T]he passion that pushed men toward the struggles for truth and for justice, was transformed into a vile desire for profit . . . and the ideal fatherland of liberty and right . . . fell to the level of a contemptible factory." Caballero's condemnation of the current era reflected, in part, his distaste for what he saw as the destructive impact of modern technology on what had been an idyllic, rural world. With economic growth, he argued, "factories stained the high blue skies with their black clouds of smoke . . . [and] material prosperity stretched telegraphs and railroads like a double web to imprison the unbroken spirit of the vast plain." These images constructed a clear opposition between a noble, heroic, rural past and a morally debased, urban present. And while Caballero lauded the masculinity of the old, rural caudillos, he claimed that this virtue too was endangered by the new order. He described contemporary Argentine youth as "that troop of indeterminate sex which drags its vanity through the avenues and the places of pleasure, where they are impelled by a gust of unhealthy lust." After arguing that a "political utilitarianism" aimed at the pursuit of wealth had "corrupted the national soul," he concluded that "virility has died or is dying in this country."¹²

In crafting this nostalgic interpretation of Argentine history, Caballero drew on many intellectual precedents. Beginning in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, the dislocations of rapid modernization and extensive immigration led many Argentine intellectuals to embark on a revalorization of the rural past. Joaquín González's 1888 work, *La tradición nacional*, celebrated Argentina's native, folk culture in a patriotic rejoinder to those who overvalued European cultural imports. González's mythification of the legendary caudillos of the past—including his description of them as "Shakespearean"—might well have served as a model for Caballero's rhetoric two decades later.¹³ After the turn of the century, the glorification of Argentina's rural past emerged as a central theme in the writings of nationalist intellectuals such as Ricardo Rojas, Manuel Gálvez, and Leopoldo Lugones. Within Argentine literature, the nostalgic, even utopian, vision of the rural past became quite common, culminating famously with Ricardo Güiraldes's 1926 novel, *Don Segundo Sombra*.¹⁴ But if Caballero's nostalgic discourse was not entirely original, he did use it in new ways. Unlike other nationalists, Caballero drew a connection between the celebration of the rural past and the defense of workers in the urban present, and he did so with the goal of recruiting political support.¹⁵

Caballero's view that economic growth had imperiled Argentina's virile national character justified a political program geared toward the defense of workers. He

concluded his 1906 speech by attacking the government's violent repression of the labor movement and its suspension of workers' civil rights. The oligarchy, he argued, had sold out the nation's poor people in its quest for personal gain. Likewise, weak-willed newspapers—what he termed the “female press”—had stood idly by as the country's rulers attacked workers and rolled back the democratic promises of the 1853 Constitution. To right these wrongs, Caballero promised to pursue a particular brand of democracy:

Here, in this city of Rosario . . . the police have declared workers outside the law. Under the pretext of searching for presumed delinquents, they have closed union headquarters, they have searched homes at all hours of the night, masses have been imprisoned, and what is more despicable, workers declared innocent have been held for 18 hours and beaten up in police stations. . . . [W]e who participated in the revolution of February [1905], we who will lead another great revolution, we did so and will do so again with the aim of uprooting this sentiment, which is opposed to the republic, to democracy, to the respect that those who work and suffer ought to inspire, a sentiment which the oligarchies have spread throughout the country. More than a political mission, Radicalism pursues a social apostolate.¹⁶

Caballero's analysis of Argentina's national decline led him to defend democracy not only as a political measure, but also as a social reform. In fact, his description of the pre-1880 period as the embodiment of the Argentine democratic ideal suggested that he defined democracy less in terms of free and fair elections than in terms of general notions of liberty and respect for the workingman. Caballero promised that Radicalism would dethrone the “mercantilist” oligarchy in order to create a nation in which workers would enjoy the “human dignity” they did when Argentina was a rural world ruled by manly caudillos.

The explicitly gendered elements of Caballero's rhetoric—his frequent usage of terms such as “virility”—betrayed a superficial resemblance to the dominant democratic rhetoric of the day. As we have seen, most local politicians employed a similar language in their appeals to voters; they depicted “responsible” political activity as masculine in order to sell it to the enfranchised masses. Still, Caballero's appeals to manly values differed fundamentally from those of his contemporaries. Politicians like the Radical Alcides Greca or the Liguista Lisandro de la Torre used such appeals to unite voters across class lines. They defined intellectual activity as masculine in order to bridge the social gaps between rich and poor, depicting both

as hard-working men. By contrast, Caballero's discourse on masculinity aimed to unite the ethnically diverse working class in opposition to the wealthy. By arguing that the rise of an exploitative oligarchy represented the decline of virility, he located masculinity firmly on one side of the class divide. His historical vision implied that today's workers were the true descendants of yesterday's manly caudillos. According to Caballero, Argentina's workers were real men; its selfish elite and oppressive government leaders were not.

Alongside this discourse on masculinity, Caballero increasingly invoked the ethnic category *criollo*, or "native." In his later speeches, he gradually replaced his defense of the working class in general with an emphasis on the worthiness and dignity of *criollo* workers in particular. If Argentina had achieved its true national character in the period before massive immigration, it was logical to defend the pre-immigration, "native" population that had been so debased by the crass profit-chasing policies of the oligarchy. In his 1906 speech, he evoked the suffering of *criollos*, but he did not yet single them out as especially deserving. In fact, he explicitly bemoaned the plight of immigrant workers who were attracted to Argentina by the promise of democracy, but were instead greeted with the Residence Law, a xenophobic, anti-anarchist deportation measure passed in 1902.¹⁷ By 1907, though, Caballero was focusing more explicitly on the troubles of *criollos*. Speaking in his hometown of Ballesteros, Córdoba, he attacked the government for selling the nation out to "foreign merchants" and, in particular, for expropriating land on behalf of the British FCCA railroad company, which now exploited the local *criollos*. Still, even in this speech, Caballero continued to attack the Residence Law and to defend the "disinherited races" who came to Argentina looking for work.¹⁸

By the time the UCR decided to participate in the 1912 gubernatorial election in Santa Fe, Caballero was the acknowledged leader of the Santa Fe Radical party's southern faction, representing the area around Rosario.¹⁹ Following an internal power struggle that resulted in the designation of Manuel Menchaca, a relative unknown, as a compromise candidate for governor, Caballero was added to the ticket in order to assuage the Rosario Radicals.²⁰ Even before his designation as candidate for vice governor, Caballero was an extremely visible campaigner for the Radical cause. And it was during this campaign that the defense of the *criollo* worker finally began to assume a clear rhetorical prominence in his speeches. Seeking to attract voters rather than to build an insurrectionary movement, Caballero now combined his pro-worker sentiments with nativist rhetoric. In one campaign speech, he began with a familiar claim: "In the history of our democracy, the Unión Cívica Radical represents political idealism against the vulgar materialism that has corrupted it."²¹ Caballero

then attacked the Socialists for allegedly cutting a deal with the Liga del Sur.²² The Liga, he argued, was a “bourgeois association par excellence,” many of whose members had publicly applauded when the Rosario police massacred innocent workers in one of Rosario’s central plazas. During the campaign, then, Caballero continued to denounce antiworker violence sanctioned by the wealthy. But other passages of the speech reveal that he now complemented this classist discourse with an argument based on ethnic categories. In these passages, Caballero attacked the Liga del Sur as an organization of foreigners who turned their backs on the “criollo element.”²³ Caballero’s repeated claims to represent the truly Argentine criollos, as opposed to the foreigners who belonged to the Liga, led *La Capital* to refer sarcastically to him and his followers as the “genuinely national” faction of the local UCR.²⁴

Caballero’s defense of the criollos, though, was in no way a departure from his concerns for the working class. On the contrary, in the 1912 speech, as in his later writings, he deployed nationalist, anti-immigrant language to make a specifically classist argument. Caballero did not attack the members of the Liga del Sur merely for their foreign origins; more important was the fact that they belonged to the “Rosarino plutocracy,” that is, the fact that they were “rich men, especially foreigners.” Most of the Liguistas, he claimed, were immigrant parvenus who participated in politics merely to further their own selfish interests. By contrast, he spoke for “the criollo people, humble and dispossessed.”²⁵ Years later, he would describe the 1912 election as a battle in which “the dispossessed but proud criollos opposed the foreignizing [*extranjerizante*] plutocracy with self-sacrifice, intelligence and courage.”²⁶ Caballero’s support for the criollos was hardly unprecedented, coming as it did at a time when immigration was provoking widespread concern. In his famous report on the state of Argentina’s working class in 1904, Juan Biale Massé had argued against the notion that criollo workers were somehow less capable than their immigrant counterparts. Although he did not oppose immigration, Biale Massé called for special legislation to protect Argentina’s native sons.²⁷ Caballero’s innovation was to use this type of rhetoric for political ends; he applauded criollo workers and attacked their foreign exploiters in order to recruit voters to the Radical party.

Glorifying the Gaucho: The Political Potential of Criollista Nationalism

Caballero’s pro-working-class nativism was, in some ways, particularly well suited to Rosario, where foreigners predominated among the wealthy sectors. The city’s ruling classes—its wealthy merchants and property owners—were composed in large part of immigrants and their children. Equally significant, Rosario’s infrastructure—

the tramways and the port, the water, sewage, gas, and electricity systems—was entirely owned and operated by foreign companies,²⁸ as was another of the city's major employers, the FCCA Railroad. Because so many Rosarinos worked directly for foreign bosses, it is not surprising that rhetorical attacks on wealthy foreigners might be an effective means of attracting working-class votes. Moreover, Caballero's depiction of the Liga del Sur as a party of and for foreign elites was not without foundation. The Liga enjoyed significant support from elite merchants and foreign shop owners, and the party's 1912 platform even included a plank in favor of giving the right to vote to property-owning foreigners.²⁹

Still, Caballero's rhetoric poses an analytical problem. While it is true that immigrants accounted for a sizable portion of Rosario's elites, they were equally numerous, if not more so, among the working population. The northern working-class neighborhoods, for example, contained the highest percentage of foreigners of any census district in the city.³⁰ If so many workers were foreign themselves, then why would Caballero appeal to them with nationalist, anti-immigrant language? One possible solution to this puzzle is that Caballero aimed his electoral propaganda specifically at the *criollo* segment of the local working class.³¹ Recognizing that immigrants lacked the right to vote, Caballero might have devised his nativist rhetoric and his glorification of the pre-immigration, rural past specifically to attract those workers who did not trace their origins to the immigration boom. And since these *criollo* workers might well have resented the new arrivals who competed with them for jobs, they might have been receptive to Caballero's xenophobic nationalism.

Unfortunately, this straightforward reading of Caballero's rhetoric does not resolve the problem. In a city built almost entirely on immigration, it seems unlikely that a clever politician would restrict his appeal to the "truly" native. The municipal census of 1910 ascribed Argentine citizenship to 97,895 people—or 53 percent of those for whom data on nationality was available. However, of this total, only 40,774—or 42 percent—had two Argentine parents.³² In other words, nearly 60 percent of the Argentine citizens living in Rosario were the children of foreigners, a percentage that would be significantly higher if we could include immigrants' grandchildren. The "truly" *criollo*—those who were not the descendants of nineteenth-century immigrants—were not only a minority within the population as a whole, but were also a minority among the city's voting citizens. Given this context, the paradox of Caballerismo remains: Why would a political faction seeking to maximize its electoral appeal deliberately alienate the vast majority of voters? The apparent success of Caballero's rhetoric only deepens the paradox.

Because Caballero's nativism typically took the form of an attack on the "foreign

plutocracy,” it must be read not as an attempt to capitalize on tensions between native and immigrant workers, but rather as an effort to mobilize the hostility that workers of all ethnic backgrounds felt toward their employers and social superiors. What made this approach possible was that in the multiethnic world of Rosario, Argentine national identity was contested terrain. Because most Rosarinos had some immigrant blood, it was not at all clear who the *criollos*—the “authentic” Argentines—were. While the term *criollo* was intended to invoke the authority of biological or racial difference, it also connoted certain character traits, a slippage that allowed observers such as Biale Massé to describe some workers of foreign backgrounds as “more *criollo* than the *criollo*.”³³ Likewise, Caballero himself occasionally attributed *criollo* virtues, such as courage, manliness, and patriotism, to certain “old foreigners.”³⁴ The term *criollo*, in other words, was available to people of different ethnicities. Caballero’s political rhetoric inflected “*lo criollo*” with working-class resonances and, in so doing, provided workers of all ethnicities with a version of Argentine national identity that they could inhabit.

By defending *criollo* workers and attacking foreign plutocrats, Caballero wove class and national identities together into a powerful political appeal. He used the term *criollo* in order to link his working-class audience to Argentina’s glorious rural past and to suggest that the true bearers of national identity were the hard-working and downtrodden masses, not the wealthy foreigners who exploited their workers. By describing class conflict as a struggle between native workers and foreign elites, Caballero told workers that they were the authentic Argentines. The appeal of this rhetoric was not limited to a small minority of xenophobic natives. On the contrary, Caballero used the language and images of a rich, popular culture in order to appeal to the working class as a whole. Caballero’s paeans to the dignified manliness of Argentina’s rural past reverberated with the enormously popular cult of the gaucho, a cult embraced as enthusiastically by immigrants and their children as by the “true” *criollos*.

The last decades of the nineteenth century saw the emergence in Argentine cities of a popular literature that celebrated the freewheeling, rebellious lifestyle of the gauchos. These migratory cowboys were a significant presence on the pampas before the expansion of large cattle estates led to their disappearance as a recognizable social group after about 1870.³⁵ Sarmiento and other modernizing liberals scorned the gauchos for their loyalty to caudillos like Rosas. These writers transformed the gaucho into a symbol of backwardness, ignorance, and barbarism. But positive, even romantic depictions of the gauchos existed as well. Beginning with the work of Bartolomé Hidalgo in 1820, a genre of “gauchesque” poetry employed the rustic dialect of the countryside to narrate epic tales of gaucho heroics. This tradition had its most famous culmination

with the publication in 1872 of José Hernández's *El gaucho Martín Fierro*. Intended in part as a political attack on the liberal regimes of Sarmiento and Bartolomé Mitre, *Martín Fierro* presented the gauchos as the victims of government oppression. The poem celebrated the hero's manly resistance to this oppression—his willingness to desert the army that drafted him by force and to fight against enormous odds.³⁶

In the works of Hidalgo and Hernández, the gaucho began to emerge as an embodiment of Argentine identity. But it was Eduardo Gutiérrez's *Juan Moreira* that became the model for the so-called criollista literature that was so popular among the urban poor at the turn of the century. Gutiérrez's work, published in 1879, shared many of the themes of *Martín Fierro*: Both tell the story of a gaucho who is persecuted by the law, turns to a life of crime, and heroically battles the police. Moreover, both works emphasize the protagonist's courage, his masculine dignity, his status as a hard worker, and his love of liberty. Still, as Adolfo Prieto has argued, *Moreira*, set as it was in a rural world filled with such signs of modernization as railroads and brothels, was better suited to the urban, working-class readers of the late nineteenth century. Gutiérrez's work was far more explicitly violent than that of Hernández; Moreira fought many more battles and did so with far less provocation than did Fierro. By glorifying these violent exploits, Gutiérrez, like the many authors who imitated him, created what Prieto calls "supermen invented to fulfill the fantasies of the urban reader."³⁷ Sold as inexpensive pamphlets and narrated in traditional verse, criollista stories modeled on *Juan Moreira* achieved immense popularity at the turn of the century.

The popular fascination with the gauchos was at least as strong in Rosario as it was in other Argentine cities. In fact, while the popularity of criollista literature seemed to decline in Buenos Aires after about 1910, the Rosario publishing house Longo y Argento began selling its own gauchesque pamphlets in 1913, making the city the national center of such publication activity.³⁸ Long before that, so-called criollo circuses had established themselves among the most popular sources of plebeian entertainment in the city. These circuses featured equestrian exhibitions, gauchesque theater productions and performances by *payadores*, guitarists who narrated gaucho tales in song. According to one account, the famous criollo actor José Podestá first performed his dramatization of Gutiérrez's *Juan Moreira* to enthusiastic crowds in Rosario.³⁹ This type of theater flourished in the city, but mass participation in *criollismo* was most evident during the annual carnival celebration, when members of local criollo clubs would don gaucho costumes and parade through the streets.⁴⁰ As late as 1925, these clubs continued to play a prominent role in Rosario's carnivals.⁴¹ Prieto has shown that the members of criollista organizations in Buenos Aires were by no means exclusively native, and the same can be said for Rosario's criollo clubs. To cite two examples, the organization

Pampa Soul ("Alma Pampa") listed one Leonardo Spinelli as its vice president, while a gaucho club called the Rosarino Brothers was led by the Carlomagno family.⁴² The prevalence of Italian last names such as these belie the notion that the cult of the gaucho was popular only among "true" criollos; immigrants and their children participated enthusiastically in the glorification of the heroes of Argentina's rural past.

Prieto has argued that the criollista phenomenon provided both native Argentines and foreigners with a much-needed sense of national identity in a disordered, cosmopolitan world. Reeling from the effects of economic modernization and immigration, natives looked to the rural world depicted in stories such as *Juan Moreira* in order to find an unchanging, traditional Argentina to anchor their feelings of national belonging. At the same time, immigrants and their children participated in the cult of the gaucho as a step toward assimilation. For both groups, reading gaucho tales or dressing up as Juan Moreira represented a conscious act of identification with the nation.⁴³ In fact, the authors of criollista pamphlets often presented the gaucho hero as a representative of the national character or, in the words of one typical story, "the truest prototype of our old countryman [*paisano*]." ⁴⁴ The cult of the gaucho allowed natives, immigrants, and second-generation Argentines to identify with this national prototype.

Immigrants did figure as characters in the criollista narratives, although usually as the objects of parody. In fact, the character of Cocoliche—an Italian immigrant who seeks to imitate the criollo way of life—became a stock figure in such works. Cocoliche's broken Spanish and ridiculous behavior made him a popular source of comic relief in gaucho dramas.⁴⁵ However, in the criollista literature produced in Rosario, Italians also began to figure in less satirical ways. By including an "assimilated Italian [*italiano acriollado*]" as a main character, Angel Amante's *Los Hermanos Barrientos* suggested that even immigrants could become good criollos. Don Angel, the Italian in Amante's story, had embraced the gaucho lifestyle and was an expert at breaking horses and using the traditional knife, or *facón*. The local gauchos, in turn, accepted the honest, hard-working Angel, noting with surprise that "this gringo [foreigner] is a good criollo!" ⁴⁶ However, when Angel's wife falls in love with the story's hero, Julio Barrientos, a duel is inevitable. Julio tries to convince the Italian that he is not to blame, but Angel feels he must defend his honor; he attacks Julio, who, now forced to fight, wounds him but spares his life. Later, when Julio is arrested by the anti-gaucho authorities, the judge calls Angel to testify, thinking that the Italian must surely hold a grudge. Instead, Angel has come to his senses, realizing that what had angered him was only "women's talk" and that Julio had behaved as a "gentleman." When the Italian refuses to testify against him, Julio graciously responds: "I did not know that you were a man, don Angel. There will come a time

when I . . . will repay your favor.”⁴⁷ This story thus stages a successful process of immigrant assimilation. Not only does don Angel possess the skills of a gaucho, but his behavior—his hotheaded defense of his personal honor—is also completely in keeping with allegedly criollo character traits. It is, after all, this type of behavior that gets gauchos like Juan Moreira in trouble with the law in the first place. Moreover, in the end, Angel’s manliness enables a reconciliation with the “true” criollo, Julio. In the heavily gendered language of the genre, Angel is welcomed into the national community when he proves himself to be a man. Popular enough to be published in four printings, *Los Hermanos Barrientos* suggested that a masculine, criollista culture could serve as a common terrain on which natives, immigrants, and the sons of immigrants might be united.

During the 1912 campaign, Caballero explicitly linked his pro-worker appeals to the unifying identity and historical vision presented in criollista stories. Although these stories were clearly apocryphal, the gaucho heroes whose exploits they narrated were often historical figures. Juan Moreira, Facundo Quiroga, Hormiga Negra, and El Chacho had actually lived, even if the criollista protagonists who took their names were, for the most part, authorial inventions. Moreover, the authors of gaucho stories typically situated themselves as historians who were recounting the past of a “proud and generous race which progress is extinguishing.”⁴⁸ Caballero’s rhetoric drew on the alternative national history suggested in these works. His notion that recent economic growth had destroyed a once-great nation evoked the criollista literature’s depiction of the manly heroes of the past. Caballero narrated this history in a 1912 campaign speech:

At times the old, dying nationality sought to protest, but soon the powerful, new fatherland was able to silence it with gunfire, and it resigned itself without giving in, convinced that those vanquished by its heroic lance were the victors of the present, representatives of a tyranny a thousand times more hateful than that which they had fought: the old caudillos, noble [*caballerescos*] and brutal, who salvaged their independence, had been replaced by the factory managers, by the railroad administrators, by the port operators, by the large foreign companies, to whom treacherous governments had handed over the national sovereignty in one-sided contracts.

Young Radicals: Radicalism must repair all those injustices. You are, I repeat, its standard bearers: understand the immensity of your task. Bring to it all the nobility and altruism of the old nationality, which must not die because it was too great, too poetic, too generous.⁴⁹

Here, Caballero presented Argentine history as a battle between an old nation of violent caudillos and a new one of sell-out governments and exploitative foreign companies. Faced with this opposition, the Radical leader clearly came down on the side of the past. The message to Rosario's enfranchised workers, both criollos and the sons of immigrants, was that by redeeming the national spirit represented by the old gaucho heroes, Caballero would redeem the exploited working class. Just as don Angel and Julio Barrientos had united in manly opposition to an oppressive government, Caballero sought to mobilize male workers of all ethnic backgrounds by appealing to their common identification with a noble, criollo past.

Caballero's historical narrative reassembled already-existing discursive elements in order to construct a class-based political identity for Rosario's workers.⁵⁰ After a decade of anarchist organizing efforts, many of the city's workers already viewed themselves as members of a distinct social class. Even if they did not belong to unions, they had certainly been exposed to the pervasive discourse of class interest. At the same time, workers of all ethnic backgrounds tended to be enthusiastic about the gaucho heroes of the past. Even if they had not read criollista stories or joined the clubs, they had undoubtedly seen the carnival parades or attended the criollo circus. By interarticulating these two discourses, Caballero devised an apt strategy for appealing to Rosario's workers, who might readily imagine themselves carrying on the gauchos' noble and heroic struggle against the oppressive forces of modernity—the latter represented in Caballero's rhetoric by the all-too-familiar figures of “factory managers . . . port operators . . . large foreign companies,” and the like. This criollista nationalism took center stage in the Radicals' campaign. Just like carnival parades, large Radical marches and rallies in Rosario nearly always featured “gauchos on horseback.”⁵¹ And even hostile observers described these demonstrations as mass events, attracting on one occasion more than five thousand people.⁵² As the 1912 campaign wore on, Caballerismo did seem to be attracting Rosario's working-class voters to the Radical cause.

To his political opponents, Caballero's criollista nationalism represented both a powerful means of attracting votes and a dangerous threat to the social order. To counteract its effect, the Liga del Sur went so far as to recruit the support of a local payador who defended the party's criollo credentials in a song composed in gauchesque verse. The song emphasized the common interests of immigrants and natives but shied away from any Caballero-style denunciation of the wealthy: “[A]s a Liguista and a criollo I am not fooling myself . . . Argentines and foreigners I want proudly to bind together.”⁵³ With this song, the leaders of the Liga del Sur hoped to harness the electoral appeal of criollismo, while stripping the discourse of its class content. These

elite politicians feared that Caballero's appropriation of the cult of the gaucho would have dangerous consequences.

In fact, long before the emergence of Caballero, local elites had recognized the counterhegemonic resonances in criollista popular culture. As early as 1893, Rosario's municipal government had banned the production of criollo plays without previous authorization from the mayor. According to the decree, these dramas encouraged viewers to commit acts of violence and undermined "the moral authority that [the police] must exercise over the masses."⁵⁴ Later, even as Caballero and his followers were capitalizing politically on criollismo, most elites continued to take a negative view of the popular cult of the gaucho.⁵⁵ In a typical article, *La Capital* celebrated the death of Hormiga Negra, a gaucho whose life had been idealized in criollista texts. According to the article, this alleged hero was really a coward and a liar. The reporter concluded optimistically:

It is consoling to think that as civilization spreads across our territory and our customs, it is reducing all that which yesterday attracted the admiration of thousands of souls to things without environment and without object, and is awakening the spirit of the new generations to the noble and beneficial things that constitute our happiness and well-being.⁵⁶

This journalist still subscribed to Sarmiento's depiction of the gaucho as a barbaric relic whose violent opposition to the forces of civilization held the nation back.⁵⁷

By linking criollismo to a defense of working-class interests, Caballero tapped into the anti-authoritarian elements already present in the gauchesque. His ideal of masculinity was equally subversive. In Caballerista discourse, the prototypically manly character traits were not intellect and rationality, as they were for most Rosarino politicians, but bravery and the willingness to defend one's honor—the virtues of the gaucho heroes. That Caballero himself became something of a symbol of this vision of masculinity is indicated by "El taita caballerito," the title of a tango composed in his honor by a local musician; originally meaning "father" or "daddy," *taita* was slang for "valiant and audacious man."⁵⁸ Caballero's rhetoric made the courageous and dignified gaucho—a figure attacked by most elite intellectuals—the archetype of masculinity and the symbol of Argentine national identity. The real men and the real Argentines, Caballero suggested, were the workers who inherited the legacy of the legendary gauchos, and not the foreign plutocrats who exploited them.

From the beginning of the campaign, the Santa Fe gubernatorial election of 1912 foregrounded questions of national identity. When vote selling became a

preoccupation on the eve of the election, the Radicals held a rally calling on their followers to renounce this practice “[i]n defense of the fatherland!”⁵⁹ The notion that unethical political behavior represented an affront to the nation appeared commonsensical. On the day of the election, a cigarette advertisement in the newspaper featured a drawing of a politician making a speech, accompanied by the caption: “[J]ust as the voter who sells his registration card does not know what patriotism is, the smoker who has not tasted a Monterrey does not know what a good smoke is.”⁶⁰ These appeals to a notion of the national interest were intended to bridge the gaps between social classes. Voting responsibly and resisting the temptation to sell one’s vote to the highest bidder were patriotic duties for all Argentines. In contrast, Caballero’s rhetoric, inflected with the language of criollismo, undermined the unifying effect of nationalism by reinforcing class identities. Attacking the Liga del Sur as a party of wealthy foreigners, the Radical leader appealed to a vision of the nation that maintained rather than obliterated class distinctions and, in so doing, introduced a potentially divisive mode of politics into the campaign.

On 31 March 1912, thousands of Rosario workers exercised their political rights for the first time, responding enthusiastically to Caballero’s criollista nationalism. The Radical ticket of Menchaca-Caballero won the contest, managing a narrow plurality in Santa Fe province as a whole, but a more impressive victory in Rosario, where Caballero had been the party’s most visible campaigner. There, the Radicals received 46.5 percent of the vote, compared to 35.5 percent for the Liga del Sur, 17.5 percent for the conservative La Coalición party, and a few dozen votes for the Socialists.⁶¹ Concrete data on the social composition of the electorate are unavailable, but it is likely that a significant proportion of those who voted for the Radicals were workers. In 1912, class-based residential segregation had not yet developed to a significant extent in Rosario. Although a truly working-class neighborhood had begun to emerge in the northern part of the city, this growing community still represented an exceptional case. As one might expect, then, Radical votes were not concentrated in any particular section of the city. The party obtained a majority in nine of the city’s ten electoral districts, a result consistent with the hypothesis that working-class votes were crucial to the party’s victory in Rosario. Certainly many observers at the time saw the electoral outcome in these terms. Commenting on the Santa Fe election, the Socialist Party’s newspaper, *La Vanguardia*, bemoaned the fact that “our working class” had voted for “bourgeois candidates.”⁶² Thanks in large part to the support of Rosario’s workers, the Radicals retained control of the Santa Fe provincial government for almost two decades. More important, the election of 1912 opened the door to a lengthy struggle over what might constitute legitimate political representation in a democracy.

Politics as Class Warfare: The Strikes of 1913

Within a year after the election, events would make Caballerismo appear even more dangerous than it had during the campaign. Although the UCR's victory surprised many observers, even those who did not sympathize with the Radicals saw the orderly and enthusiastic participation of the masses as a positive sign for the future of Argentine democracy.⁶³ But a series of labor conflicts culminating in a general strike in April 1913 eroded this optimism. The strikes began as typical workplace conflicts but became politicized when Caballero and his followers publicly supported the workers' cause. Presenting themselves as the political defenders of the working class, the Caballeristas encouraged the strikers to blame their misfortunes on the Liguista politicians who dominated the city council. By raising the specter of class politics, this strategy violated the ideal of a nonpluralist democracy. As the strikes turned increasingly violent, politicians of both major parties worried that by bringing class interests into politics, Caballero had undermined democracy and planted the seeds of social disorder.

In the aftermath of the 1912 election, workers moved to take advantage of the new environment created by the Radical party's victory. Having listened for months to Caballero's pro-labor rhetoric, they could not but expect that the new provincial government would be more supportive of labor's demands. But of course Caballerismo's appeal to workers was not uncontested. Rosario's anarchist union leaders recognized party politics in general, and Caballero in particular, as a major threat to their monopoly over the role of labor's representative. The local anarchist newspaper, *La Rebelión*, insisted that electoral democracy had not helped the "proletarian class" and scoffed at the equality promised by universal male suffrage: "As long as society is divided into the productive, the ruled and the hungry versus the unproductive, the tyrants and the well fed, that equality which is so desired will not appear."⁶⁴ By insisting on the fundamental irreducibility of class divisions, the anarchists hoped to solidify their claim to represent workers. As long as bourgeoisie and proletariat existed in Argentina, the anarchists argued, it made no sense for workers to participate in mainstream politics. The various parties and, for that matter, the electoral system as a whole, served elite interests and repressed workers. Moreover, anarchists vehemently denounced the appeals to patriotism with which elite politicians—both Caballeristas and others—lured workers. They argued that workers ought to have a sense of "internationalism," a feeling of solidarity with all members of their class across national borders.⁶⁵ Through this rhetoric, anarchist leaders constituted workers as a collective subject defined by their class affiliation, rather than by any ethnic or national solidarities that might cut across class lines. Even though the political ends they pursued were diametrically opposed, anarchists and elite

politicians were thus engaged in structurally similar projects: Each group constructed an identity for workers in order to legitimize its claim to represent them. While the Liguistas and many Radicals hailed workers as patriotic, virtuous citizens without class interests, anarchists addressed them as class-conscious proletarians for whom citizenship and national affiliation were irrelevant. At the same time, the Caballeristas combined class and citizenship, appealing to workers as the noble descendants of the nation's gaucho heroes. Rosarino workers did not fully inhabit any one of these identities. On the contrary, during the labor mobilization of 1913, workers proved willing to take advantage of all of the political and discursive resources available to them.

The 1913 strikes unfolded in the context of a bitter political rivalry within Rosario's municipal government. At the local level, state power was divided between three principal offices: the jefe político (chief of police), the intendente (mayor), and the concejo deliberante (city council). While the first two of these offices were appointed by the provincial government, the members of the city council were elected. The tax-paying requirement and unwieldy registration process that continued to govern municipal elections, as well as the enfranchisement of foreigners in these contests, resulted in an electorate that contrasted in size and social composition with the one that participated in provincial elections. These voting restrictions, and the low turnouts they caused, enabled the Liga del Sur to secure a consistent majority on the council beginning in 1909.⁶⁶ In this context, conflicts between Radical mayors and the Liga-dominated council became a recurring feature of Rosarino political life. Within six months of Menchaca's and Caballero's inauguration, the Radicals' first two mayoral appointees had resigned or been forced out of office as a result of the political stalemate between the two main branches of city government.

On 20 November 1912, Governor Menchaca appointed J. Daniel Infante mayor of Rosario. A lawyer born and raised in Spain, Infante's Republican leanings had led to his persecution and eventual emigration to Argentina in 1889.⁶⁷ After settling in Rosario, he became an advocate of democratic reform and an outspoken defender of the working class. As early as 1905, Infante wrote articles on the "labor question," defending workers' right to strike and attacking the oppression they suffered at the hands of fraudulently elected governments.⁶⁸ This defense of working-class interests echoed the sentiments expressed in Caballero's speeches, and the two became friends and political allies. Although he was an early member of the Liga del Sur, Infante began to criticize the party and to move closer to the Radicals in 1911. Writing in the Radical newspaper *El Mensajero*, Infante argued that the 1912 election provided an opportunity to defeat the oligarchy, an opportunity that could be squandered if the Radicals and Liguistas divided the popular vote. He had backed

the Liga's attempts to wrest political power from the conservative city of Santa Fe, but he now worried that the party would draw votes away from the Radicals. Moreover, he was alarmed by rumors that the Liga might ally with the oligarchic Coalición party. Although he did not formally break with the Liga del Sur until after the election, Infante's frequent contributions to *El Mensajero* made his sympathy for the Radical cause explicit.⁶⁹

Even before his appointment as mayor, Infante had been called into the service of the new Radical government. The occasion was a strike movement in southern Santa Fe province launched by tenant farmers who were suffering from the effects of bad harvests, harsh tenancy contracts, and rising indebtedness. In response to the unrest, Menchaca appointed a commission, composed of Caballero, Infante, and Toribio Sánchez, another well-to-do Spaniard, to analyze the causes of the conflict. In late July 1912, the commission released a report denouncing the exploitation of tenant farmers by wealthy landowners and fully supporting the demands of the strikers.⁷⁰ By this time, Infante was clearly associated with Caballero's faction, even though he insisted that he was not a member of the Radical party and that his ideological position actually made him a socialist.⁷¹ In any case, his pro-labor views were well known. As late as October 1912, just one month before he was appointed mayor of Rosario, Infante argued in *El Mensajero* that the state ought to set the tone for the labor market by paying public workers enough for them to live comfortably, regardless of the laws of supply and demand.⁷² Nevertheless, these views alone did not make him a dangerous extremist in the eyes of the Rosarino establishment. *La Capital*, which had been hostile to the Radical government and to its previous mayoral appointee, greeted the announcement of Infante's appointment with cautious optimism, predicting that the new mayor would cooperate with the city council.⁷³ Given the views of Biale Massé and other elites, Infante's rhetorical support for working-class interests was an acceptable position within Rosario's political milieu. However, once in office, Infante quickly tested the limits of this acceptance.

In his inaugural speech, Infante declared his commitment to a vastly expanded municipal budget and to a progressive tax system based on high property taxes and cuts in the sales tax on essential consumer goods. A revolutionary proposal for the time, the plan provoked widespread concern among the city's wealthier sectors.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the mayor took care to demonstrate his pro-labor sympathies. In early December, he publicly announced his support for an ongoing strike by the city's tramway workers. The strike ended with a compromise solution, but not before one worker had died in an outburst of violence. At the funeral services, attended by an estimated seven hundred workers, Infante displayed his solidarity with the

workers' cause by helping to carry the coffin.⁷⁵ Later that month, the mayor presented his proposal for a municipal budget. Following through on the promises he had made upon assuming office, Infante proposed two new progressive taxes: one on capital and the other on income. In addition to lowering the taxes that most affected poor people, the mayor also proposed a minimum wage for municipal workers, arguing that in the current system "capitalism . . . grows and grows at the expense of labor."⁷⁶ The city council, predictably, refused to consider Infante's budget.

These proposals were enough to raise the suspicions of Liguistas predisposed to distrust a Radical-appointed mayor, but Infante quickly alienated members of the UCR as well. It was generally assumed that Infante owed his appointment to Caballero and to the provincial minister of government, Antonio Herrera, a political ally of the vice governor. Beyond this faction, however, the new mayor enjoyed little Radical support.⁷⁷ By firing a number of Radicals from municipal offices, Infante only strengthened the opposition he faced. When Infante dismissed Nicolás Amuchástegui from his position as a legal advisor to the municipality, the latter received dozens of letters of support from Rosario's prominent businessmen and politicians, both Liguistas and Radicals. One such letter demonstrated the class-based anxieties that underlay the growing hostility to Infante: "Our Mayor, dear friend, is the prototype of the greengrocer who disguises himself as a count, and feels himself to be a real count, even though his arms feel the absence of the weight of his baskets."⁷⁸ Although Infante himself was a prosperous businessman and lawyer, his symbolic and programmatic affiliation with the working class began to seem like a transgression of class boundaries. The mayor's pro-labor views had been relatively unthreatening before he took office, but by using the power of the municipal government to support those views, Infante was now violating the prohibition against class politics.

In January 1913, a strike by the city's sanitation workers raised the stakes of the dispute between the mayor and his political opponents. These workers had first struck in 1911, demanding a pay raise from 2.20 pesos per day to 2.50. The city granted this raise, but without changing the terms of the municipal budget. The number of workers was reduced so that the city used the same overall sum to pay fewer workers a higher wage. Infante, angered by the council's refusal to consider his budget proposal and believing that the sanitation workers deserved as much as three pesos per day, encouraged them to protest. He followed the letter of the law by paying the workers the 2.20 that the existing budget prescribed and blamed the wage cut on the city council. As Infante probably foresaw, the workers struck again. With garbage piling up on the streets, the city council appointed a commission to resolve the conflict. Led by the prominent Liguista Francisco Correa, the commission authorized the

mayor to spend an emergency sum of 7,000 pesos in order to cover the sanitation workers' wages for February and March. However, Correa attacked Infante for springing the strike on the council at the last moment and rejected the mayor's argument that the workers deserved more than 2.50 per day. For his part, Infante denied having played any role in the strike and reiterated his belief that workers' wages should be determined by their needs and not by supply and demand.⁷⁹

Two months later, the sanitation workers' conflict was ready to erupt again. The emergency money granted by the city council was due to run out by the end of March, and the garbage collectors once again protested the imminent pay cut. Again, Infante publicly supported their demands. Despite the origin of the conflict in a salary dispute that dated back over a year, *La Capital* blamed the mayor for intentionally provoking the strike. Infante, responding to an order from Governor Menchaca, tried in vain to delay the declaration of the strike, but the newspaper refused to see the mayor's inability to persuade the workers as a sign of the independence of the movement. Rather, *La Capital* argued that "the mayor had excited the strikers too much for them to return in their tracks."⁸⁰ According to this analysis, the conflict responded entirely to the political motives of the mayor and not to any legitimate class interest on the part of the workers; Infante, *La Capital* argued, had provoked the strikes by convincing the workers that they had a reason to oppose the city council.⁸¹ When the strikers released a manifesto explaining the causes of their strike, *La Capital* reported that the form and content of the document clearly indicated that it had been written by Infante. The manifesto labeled the municipality "a bad boss without feelings and without humanity," and listed demands including a hefty pay raise, a weekly paid day off, overtime pay, accident insurance, respect for the right to strike, and an end to the bribery that governed job allocation.⁸² These demands were typical of the labor conflicts of the day, and in other circumstances *La Capital* would most likely have called for the negotiation of a compromise solution. But the fact that the strikers aimed their attacks at the municipal government, and specifically at the city council, was enough for the newspaper to label the strike political. And by insisting that Infante must have written the strikers' manifesto, *La Capital* denied the possibility that workers could have such political interests. For the newspaper's editors, workers' economic, class-based interests lost their legitimacy as soon as they entered the political arena.

Meanwhile, the city council stepped up its long-running efforts to have Infante dismissed as mayor. Through an investigation into the mayor's private business interests, the council claimed to have turned up evidence that a company partly owned by Infante was building a housing development without having attained the

proper permits or paid the requisite taxes. On 4 April, Governor Menchaca rejected the council's formal request that Infante be fired.⁸³ But despite this support from the provincial government, the mayor resigned four days later. By refusing to negotiate with the strikers so long as Infante remained in office, the council had forced him out. In his letter of resignation, Infante declared that he could not continue as mayor if by doing so he would "make the working class suffer any harm."⁸⁴ With its political foe gone, the council immediately authorized the necessary expenditures to preserve the sanitation workers' wages for two more months. Moreover, the council required the interim mayor to present a modified budget in order to satisfy the workers' wage demands more permanently.

Even as they gave in to the workers' principal demand, the Liguista councilmen attacked Infante as a "promoter of strikes [*empresario de huelgas*]," who fomented labor conflict in order to further his political interests.⁸⁵ Likewise, *La Capital* denounced the provincial government for appointing mayors who would ignite a "dangerous class war" against the city council. Despite the restricted nature of municipal elections, the newspaper argued that the council, and not these rabble-rousing mayors, represented the true "popular will."⁸⁶ As this language demonstrates, the danger represented by Infante derived from his attempt to deploy working-class protest politically, to bring class interests into the sphere that ought to belong to "the people." This threat of a politics based on class interest did not disappear with Infante's resignation. Just two days after the mayor quit, the Radical newspaper *El Mensajero* called on workers to strike against the city council:

The working masses must be convinced that the decisive moment for protest has arrived and that since the aristocratic councilmen of Rosario have only had gestures of contempt and arrogance for the poor, it is necessary to collect on the debt once and for all, teaching those "decent" gentlemen that popular justice may be delayed but not stopped. . . . All the unions of Rosario must unite as a single man and settle accounts with those councilmen.⁸⁷

By calling for a strike to demand the resignation of the members of the city council, the newspaper explicitly sought to use labor protest for partisan, political ends.

Meanwhile, the sanitation workers' strike was not yet over. The workers, now joined by other municipal employees, released a manifesto directly attacking the city council. At the same time, a so-called "popular independent committee" emerged, composed, at least in part, of Caballerista activists seeking to encourage labor protest against the Liguista councilmen.⁸⁸ Not surprisingly, *La Capital*, as well as the councilmen

themselves, were quick to blame this committee of “political agitators” for what they saw as an unjustified continuation of the strike. The newspaper denounced the committee for trying “to entangle labor matters with a political issue.”⁸⁹ Once again, *La Capital* restricted workers’ legitimate class interests to economic concerns; any political demands must have been imposed on the strikers by outsiders. Ironically, Rosario’s anarchist labor federation, the FOLR, agreed. The FOLR distributed a handbill denying rumors of a general strike and attacking “certain politicians of this city” for attempting to capitalize on the municipal workers’ conflict: “Although the Federation . . . adheres morally to the movement insofar as it is an economic struggle, it has not declared a general strike, nor will it do so until the unions meet and make their own determination, which will not be influenced by political interests of any kind.”⁹⁰ The strike finally ended when the city council approved an offer that included a daily wage of three pesos—precisely the sum that had seemed so outrageous when Infante proposed it. As the strikers went back to work, *La Capital* complimented “the good sense of the working men,” who had rejected political goals and instead defended “their own rights.”⁹¹

Both anarchists and Liguistas celebrated the resolution of the sanitation workers’ strike as evidence that workers had resisted the machinations of unscrupulous politicians. But the celebration did not last long. On 19 April, just five days after the end of the strike, Rosario’s tramway workers walked off the job.⁹² Like the sanitation workers’ conflict, this new strike began as a workplace dispute based on typical union demands. But once again, efforts by Caballerista politicians to direct the protest against the Liga del Sur transformed the nature of the conflict. The strike broke out when the Belgian-owned tramway company announced plans to cut back its service due to the reduced traffic of the winter season. The company suspended a total of twenty-three cars, resulting in the dismissal of ninety-two workers. Insisting that all workers be rehired immediately, the Society of Tramway Employees rejected a compromise solution engineered by Ricardo Núñez, the Radical police chief, and Carlos Paganini, the Liguista city council president, now serving as interim mayor. Achieving a high level of solidarity among its members, the union nearly managed to shut down the city’s only effective means of public transportation. Almost immediately, the municipal workers declared that they would go back on strike in solidarity with the tramway union, should the conflict not be resolved soon. Both the cart drivers and the bricklayers followed suit,⁹³ and within days the FOLR had declared a full-scale general strike to go into effect on 26 April. With the railroad workers, shop employees, and stevedores all among the unions participating in the movement, economic activity in Rosario ground to a halt.⁹⁴ Within a week, thirty thousand to forty thousand workers were on strike.⁹⁵

While negotiations among the municipal authorities, company representatives, and union delegates stalled, the conflict became increasingly violent. In the most serious episode, a large group of workers, variously estimated at from two thousand to six thousand men, rioted and destroyed a tramway car in front of the principal entrance to the FCCA railroad workshops. This incident was one of several in the northern working-class district, in which workers tried to prevent the tramway company from circulating its cars with scab labor.⁹⁶ But if these episodes testified to a high degree of working-class solidarity, other outbursts of violence revealed the decidedly political nature of the conflict. A significant portion of the violent acts committed by strikers were directed at Liguista politicians. In the northern barrios, strikers stoned two businesses owned by men who served on the city council as representatives of the Liga del Sur. In the center of town, a mob threw rocks at the prominent Liguista councilmen Luis Calderón and Gervasio Colombres, wounding the former. Strikers even assaulted the home of Carlos Paganini, the interim mayor.⁹⁷ In addition to these incidents of directed violence, the strike also witnessed a certain amount of generalized vandalism; according to one Liguista politician, rioters destroyed 689 gas street lamps and 427 electric lights, as well as uprooting 150 trees along one of the city's principal avenues.⁹⁸

From the beginning of the strike, *La Capital* blamed the unrest on political agitators. According to the paper, the tramway workers were acting on "unhealthy suggestions from hidden interests;" legitimate working-class interests were not at stake.⁹⁹ *La Capital* blamed the strikers' hostility toward the city council on the so-called "popular independent committee," which, it claimed, was under the direction of Caballero and Infante. In this view, the violent nature of the conflict was a byproduct of its political motivations: "It is known that a group of Radicals . . . leading groups of strikers has attempted to transform the streets and squares of the city into centers of provocations and disorder."¹⁰⁰ After the strike, one Liguista politician argued that those who had attacked private property and threatened lives were not workers but "well-known political agitators involved in attacking the stability of the Rosario city council."¹⁰¹ These arguments once again rejected the possibility that workers might have political interests.

The Liguistas were correct in asserting that groups of Radical politicians were trying to direct the strikers' hostility toward the city council. Even Minister of Government Herrera later admitted that the so-called "popular independent committee" had attempted to lead the strikers in a protest against the Liguista councilmen.¹⁰² In addition to the Caballerista Radicals, the Socialist Party also sought to establish itself as the workers' representative. Members of the party gave speeches to the strikers, while the local Socialist Center released pro-labor manifestos. Moreover, two of the

most prominent Socialists in Argentina, the national deputies Juan B. Justo and Mario Bravo, came to Rosario in order to represent the union in negotiations with the tramway company.¹⁰³ Some historians have explained the interest of Radicals and Socialists in the strike by arguing that the tramway workers were almost exclusively *criollos*. As such, they had the right to vote and represented a potential base of electoral support. These historians argue that Caballero had already aligned himself with *criollos* during the 1912 campaign; by supporting them in the strike, he was merely trying to solidify an existing political alliance.¹⁰⁴

In fact, the Caballeristas did not restrict their appeal to *criollo* workers. Their support for the striking tramway union represented the continuation of a policy begun during the sanitation workers' conflict. During that strike, Infante and others had supported labor's demands and tried to direct the strikers' hostility against the Liguista city council. But the sanitation workers, far from being exclusively *criollos*, were ridiculed in the Liguista press for their inability to speak Spanish and their tendency to cheer Infante in foreign languages.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the evidence offered to support the predominance of *criollos* on the tramway workforce is weak.¹⁰⁶ In fact, the company's personnel records from 1916, just three years after the strike, reveal a high percentage of foreign last names.¹⁰⁷ In the context of a labor dispute against a foreign-owned company, an appeal to working-class, *criollista* nationalism made sense, regardless of the strikers' ancestry. Having depicted the Liga del Sur as a party of wealthy foreigners, Caballero now attacked the Liguista city council for caving in to the Belgian tramway company. His support for the strikers was part of an ongoing attempt to mobilize workers across ethnic lines in a political movement against the Liga del Sur.

Caballero, Infante, and their followers did actively try to use labor conflicts as weapons against their political enemies, and evidence suggests that at least some workers responded enthusiastically to these efforts. Throughout the conflict, the strikers often seemed more responsive to Caballerista politicians than to their supposed leaders within the labor movement. At several points, rank-and-file workers acted without the approval of the FOLR. As late as April, the leaders of the federation had expressed only lukewarm support for the striking sanitation workers, while denouncing the efforts of "certain politicians of this city" to capitalize on the conflict.¹⁰⁸ The fact that the tramway workers, sanitation workers, cart drivers, and others struck before receiving the backing of the union federation suggests that Caballerismo may have weakened the control of the antipolitical union leadership over Rosario's workers. As the strikes progressed, Caballero's influence was increasingly evident in the statements and behavior of workers. While the sanitation workers' union originally framed its demands in strictly economic, nonpartisan terms, by mid-April the strike committee

was issuing manifestos directly attacking the Liguista majority on the city council.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, during the early days of the tramway strike, *La Vanguardia* reported that a “mass of workers” stood outside the city council, jeering at the councilmen as they entered and left the building. Although this newspaper would later attack the Radicals for trying to co-opt the movement, its initial reports suggested that some workers shared the Radicals’ belief that the city council favored the interests of the foreign tramway company over those of the workers.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Hipólito Zubía, one of the councilmen whose businesses were stoned by strikers, wrote a letter to the railroad workers’ federation after the incident, claiming that he was not actually a member of the Liga del Sur and denying rumors that he had supported low wages for workers.¹¹¹ Zubía believed that workers, and not political agitators, had attacked his store because they perceived him to be an antilabor Liguista politician. Contrary to the opinion of many observers, then, many workers did come to see the conflict in political terms. The Caballeristas’ rhetorical attacks on the Liga del Sur—their insistence on bringing working-class interests into the political arena—resonated with the strikers.

In the end, however, the violence and economic paralysis caused by the strikes undermined the viability of Caballero’s pro-labor politics. Due to the seriousness of the conflict and the intransigence of both labor and management, the minister of government came to Rosario on 24 April, followed by the governor himself two days later. Once in Rosario, Menchaca immediately appointed a commission composed of prominent Radicals and members of the Bolsa de Comercio—the city’s elite merchants’ organization—and charged it with the task of initiating an arbitration process. Although the tramway workers union was initially receptive to the idea, negotiations reached a stalemate on the issue of who would wield the tiebreaking vote on the arbitration panel.¹¹² On 27 April, Caballero arrived in Rosario and asked Menchaca for permission to lead a large demonstration of strikers on a march to the city government building, where they would demand the resignation of the city council. At this point, Menchaca found himself in the middle of a dispute between two wings of the local Radical party.

As the streets filled up with garbage, the city’s markets began to run out of food, new unions joined the general strike, and the violence continued unabated, many Radicals believed that the government’s top priority should be to restore order. This group was led by police chief Ricardo Núñez, who as early as 22 April, the fourth day of the strike, had issued a decree restricting the right of free assembly. Núñez opposed Caballero’s attempts to politicize the conflict and threatened to resign should Menchaca allow the vice governor to hold his demonstration. After a brief

hesitation, the governor sided with Núñez.¹¹³ He ordered Caballero to cancel the march, asked the national government to send troops, and even requested a declaration of martial law. The minister of interior denied this last request, but did send in the army. By 30 April, a military force under the direction of General Eduardo Ruíz had occupied Rosario.¹¹⁴ Three days later, *La Capital* celebrated what it perceived to be the defeat of Caballero, Herrera, Infante, and their followers: “[I]t now happens that those who are responsible [for the conflict], those who deified virility, are nowhere to be found.”¹¹⁵ In the context of a sustained threat to the social order, Caballero had lost his leverage within the provincial government. Radicals such as Menchaca and Núñez had tolerated Caballero’s pro-labor, nationalist rhetoric during the campaign, but they were unwilling to do so at a time of labor unrest. Even though the Radical government stood to gain from the vice governor’s attacks on the Liguista council, these politicians refused to countenance a policy that seemed to encourage working-class mobilization.

For many politicians—both Liguistas and Radicals—the strikes of 1913 seemed to prove that an explicitly pro-worker politics would lead inevitably to labor conflict and class-based violence. For example, Liguista provincial senator Enrique Thedy argued that the massive unrest of late April was a direct result of Infante’s political maneuvers during the preceding months. By attacking the city council and telling municipal workers that they were underpaid, Infante “had left in the working masses a ferment of anarchy which resulted in the movement that recently unfolded in Rosario.”¹¹⁶ Thedy’s argument revealed that what politicians feared was the power of words; they believed that the rabble-rousing of politicians such as Infante and Caballero incited workers to revolt against their social superiors. This perception made all the more urgent the need to abjure any appeals to working-class interests and instead emphasize the common interests of the people as a whole. After the general strike was over, the Radical party leadership clearly enunciated its support for this nonpluralist model of democratic politics. A local Radical newspaper declared that “radicalism is neither a labor party nor a bourgeois party; it is not, in a word, a class party.”¹¹⁷ With this statement, the Radicals distanced themselves from Caballero’s brand of pro-labor politics.

Having lost the backing of Governor Menchaca, Caballero could no longer offer the workers much political support. Instead of a sympathetic government, the strikers now faced a full-scale military occupation. At the same time, the local anarchist labor federation withdrew its support from the strike. On 1 May, the FOLR denounced the tramway workers for having accepted the representation of the Socialists Justo and Bravo. In response to this alleged betrayal of the

Rosarino working class, the federation officially ended the general strike. The anarchists' arguments against Socialist intervention bore a striking resemblance to the denunciations of class politics made by mainstream politicians: Both groups believed that workers had no legitimate political interests. The FOLR leaders attacked the tramway workers for mixing "social labor matters with political matters, from which workers must separate themselves out of dignity."¹¹⁸ They called on the proletariat to recognize that opposition to all forms of government was the only means of achieving working-class emancipation.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Socialists, faced with the end of the solidarity strikes and the continued intransigence of the tramway company, ended their intervention. Frustrated by their inability to gain the confidence of Rosario's workers, the Socialists accused the anarchist FOLR of being a front for the Radical party and blamed the failure of the strikes on the influence of Caballerismo: "Criollo Radicalism, led in Rosario by the ex-anarchist and current Vice Governor, Mr. Ricardo Caballero, wants to take advantage of the labor movement by directing it against the Liga del Sur."¹²⁰ Although the tramway workers remained off the job until mid-May, the strike was now doomed.

The tramway workers' movement failed because it became entangled in a larger struggle over the nature of political representation. The strikers took advantage of every offer of support that was made to them, whether it came from Caballerista Radicals, anarchist unions, or Socialist legislators. In the end, though, each of these offers was withdrawn. Although driven by different motives, neither mainstream politicians nor anarchist unionists were willing to cross the rigid line separating class interest and party politics. The Caballeristas had tried to penetrate that line, but at least for the time being, they were defeated. For the majority of Rosarino politicians, the strikes of 1913 revealed the extent of the danger posed by Caballero's alternative brand of politics. By constructing a class-based political identity for the city's workers, Caballero seemed to exacerbate class conflict, encouraging violent labor protest and further deepening society's class divisions. Most politicians—whether Radical or Liguista—now rallied against him in order to preserve their vision of a unified nation. As federal troops marched into Rosario, the tramway workers suffered the consequences of the political establishment's rejection of Caballerista class politics.

CHAPTER FOUR

Partisanship, *Caudillismo*, and the Threat of Class Politics, 1913-1916

Governor Menchaca's decision to seek a military solution to the tramway workers' strike of 1913 represented a significant setback for Caballero's brand of pro-labor politics. By calling in the federal troops, Menchaca sent a clear signal that the government's unwillingness to tolerate further labor unrest outweighed any interest it had in garnering the support of workers. The governor's anti-Caballero stance weakened Rosario's labor movement, stripping the unions of the political leverage they had enjoyed during the first few months of 1913. Indeed, it would be well over two years before the city witnessed another major strike. Although this labor passivity was in part the result of high levels of unemployment caused by the onset of World War I, Caballero's loss of political influence was a contributing factor. The military occupation of May 1913 proved that Santa Fe's democratically elected government would not hesitate to repress an aggressive labor movement. Given the unfavorable economic environment, this threat was enough to keep Rosario's union leaders from launching a risky offensive. But if Menchaca's rejection of Caballerismo had helped pacify the unions, it could not make the threat of class politics suddenly disappear. More than any other issue, the problem of how to incorporate workers into party politics shaped the political system that emerged during the next few years.

Between 1913 and 1916, political commentators across party lines identified two fundamental flaws in Argentine democracy. First, excessive partisanship seemed to prevent the implementation of effective policy. In particular, partisan squabbling produced an unending series of stalemates in the provincial legislature, undermining the capacity of that body to pass much-needed laws. Second and equally troubling, many observers argued that the democratic party system had not yet fully replaced the so-called caudillismo of the period before electoral reform. According to this view, the parties continued to employ corrupt, clientelist campaign techniques, recruiting voters through coercion or by promising patronage jobs and other favors. Historians have, by and large, ratified these criticisms of Argentina's first democracy, depicting a party system in which electoral outcomes were determined

more by clientelist, machine politics than by any substantive policy disagreements among the parties. If politics was dominated by the distribution of patronage, then the relative paucity of significant policy achievements during these years is easily understood.¹ In this chapter, I offer a different interpretation both of the lack of effective policymaking and of the contemporary obsession with caudillismo. Both of these phenomena, I argue, were byproducts of a more fundamental condition: the fear of class politics.²

The violent labor conflicts of 1913 demonstrated that any attempt to build an electoral base by promising to defend working-class interests could easily lead to social disorder. Despite the labor peace that characterized the next few years, this specter continued to haunt most Rosarino politicians, producing a legislature crippled by partisan rancor and electoral campaigns that were largely devoid of content. Afraid of a recurrence of violent unrest, many legislators refused to vote for any bill that could be interpreted as a favor to the working class. As a result, a series of social reform measures that had enjoyed unanimous support died once they were introduced in the legislature. Similarly, the parties were so averse to presenting themselves as the representatives of particular social sectors that their platforms tended to converge. In this atmosphere, electoral campaigns were not so much occasions to debate policy as they were opportunities to pledge one's support for a nonsectoral politics of ideas and to attack one's opponent for reviving the corrupt methods of a backward era. Although motivated by the desire to keep class interests out of party politics, these rhetorical attacks on caudillismo failed to prevent a Caballerista comeback. Employing his distinctive mix of criollista nationalism and pro-working-class sentiment, Caballero reemerged within the leadership of a new Radical faction that managed to unseat Menchaca's party within two years. His political opponents had failed to transform Rosario's workers into virtuous citizens who would ignore their class interests as they pursued the common good.

The Inefficacy of Party Politics

Less than two years after taking office, Manuel Menchaca had already begun to complain about the stifling effects of party politics. An official report on the provincial government's activities during 1913 blamed the administration's low level of accomplishment on the destructive behavior of its political enemies. During the first year of Menchaca's term, the author of the report argued, the government's initiatives were "impeded by the opposition of a parliamentary group which put narrow partisanship—the cause of so much damage to the general interests—ahead of its constitutional and democratic mission."³ The argument that partisan interests

and loyalties represented a threat to the common good was a recurrent theme in the political rhetoric of the day, and it did have some basis in reality. Although politicians were reluctant to admit publicly that they sometimes placed the well-being of their party over that of the people, their actions often revealed such motivations.⁴ In any case, the existence of partisanship in an electoral democracy is not surprising. But as Menchaca's lament suggests, the early years of democratic politics witnessed an extraordinary degree of stagnation in which political stalemates seemed to block effective policymaking. Even when all the major parties agreed on the need for a certain law, the legislature often failed to take action. While Menchaca and many of his contemporaries blamed these failures on straightforward partisanship, an examination of several cases reveals that the inefficacy of the legislature had more to do with the fear of class politics and with the particular conception of democratic parties dominant at the time.

From the beginning of the democratic period, Rosarino politicians of all parties agreed on the need for certain reformist labor laws. Frequent strikes during the first decade of the century had convinced the city's elites of the existence of a large working class with legitimate class interests. Most observers and politicians supported progressive labor laws that would help prevent conflicts while improving the standard of living of the city's working people. As early as 1913, the Menchaca government called for the creation of a provincial labor department in order to "favor the working classes" by intervening in conflicts and operating a job placement service.⁵ Likewise, the opposition newspaper *La Capital* responded to both the railroad strike of 1912 and the tramway conflict of the following year with calls for modern labor legislation.⁶ This consensus was evident in the provincial legislature as well. The Radical deputy Alcides Greca encountered unanimous support when he presented bills to regulate the labor of women and children and to establish an eight-hour workday. And yet, neither measure was passed. Despite broad agreement among representatives of all parties, Santa Fe's legislature proved incapable of generating significant pro-labor reform.

Greca first presented his child and female labor bill in 1913 as part of a "broad plan of labor legislation," which was to include the creation of a provincial labor department and a law to provide affordable housing for workers, among other measures. The bill, an adaptation of the national "Palacios Law" already on the books, provided maternity leave, an eight-hour day, a ban on night work, and other benefits for women and minors. Greca defended this proposal as a response to the demands of "the great working masses" and a means of ensuring their physical well-being: "[I]t is a question of the welfare of the working people; that immanent energy, fortifier of our nationality and very important factor in our wealth."⁷ The Radical congressman's rhetoric emphasized that workers deserved these protections because of their importance to

the nation. And as an issue of national interest, labor legislation was above party loyalties. Greca concluded his speech on behalf of the child and female labor law with a plea for nonpartisanship:

I, sirs, am not a man of party, I am not a politician; I am a man of ideas, with a concrete and defined program. . . . I have come to this seat without prejudices against anyone. I know that no group, party or sect has an exclusive monopoly on goodness. There are good men everywhere and in every party. Today I address those sitting in this hall to ask them to help the poor, to benefit the worker.⁸

Greca presented labor legislation as a nonpolitical issue; good men, regardless of their party affiliation, should want to help working people and pass laws that would benefit the nation as a whole.

Greca introduced the child and female labor bill just a few days after the end of the sanitation workers' strike of 1913. Not coincidentally, he argued that laws of this type would help prevent a recurrence of labor unrest.⁹ By presenting labor legislation as a nonpartisan initiative, Greca contrasted his own proposals with the political maneuvers of Caballero and his followers. He disavowed any political motive, assuring his audience that unlike the vice governor, he was not trying to attract workers to his own party. Instead, he argued that by acting together to pass these laws, politicians of all parties could encourage labor peace. Greca may have thought that the aftermath of the strike provided the perfect opportunity for this type of proposal, because legislators were particularly aware of the dangers of labor unrest and its potential for manipulation by ambitious politicians. But the unrest was not over; on the very day that Greca introduced his project, the tramway workers went on strike, and Rosario was once again the site of a labor conflict with political overtones. Although the tramway conflict and the general strike that followed made the need for legislative action even more apparent, it seemed to have a paralyzing effect on the legislature. The chamber of deputies became preoccupied with the Rosario strike and, particularly, with the Caballeristas' role in it. On 9 May, eight days after the general strike had ended, the representatives devoted nearly the entire day's session to a debate over the government's handling of the conflict.¹⁰ Alarmed by the violence of the strike, politicians were more eager to condemn Caballero-style class politics than to pass progressive reforms. During what remained of the 1913 legislative period, Greca's bills were neither debated nor brought forward for a vote.

However, the following year brought a revival of the labor reform movement.

The first indication that the legislature was ready to act on behalf of the working class came on 26 June, when Greca proposed a law prohibiting work on a series of recognized holidays. The idea of requiring that workers be given the day off on Independence Day would not have been controversial, but the bill extended official holiday status to 1 May, international labor day and the traditional day of celebration for Argentina's anarchist unions. Supporters of the bill, such as the Rosarino Radicals Juan Luis Ferrarotti, Miguel Culaciati, and Tobías Arribillaga, backed the holiday out of respect for workers' "rights of class." These outspoken defenders of labor encountered no significant opposition in the provincial chamber of deputies, and the measure was passed.¹¹ Emboldened by this victory, Greca reintroduced both the child and female labor bill and the eight-hour-day proposal the next day. He was so confident that these measures would now pass that he removed a provision from the latter bill that had called for the eight-hour day to be phased in over a period of one year. He argued that this gradual approach was no longer necessary because "today there exists a sincere current of sympathy toward these laws of labor protectionism."¹² Over a year had passed since the strikes of 1913, and while Rosario's unions remained quiet, unemployment and the rising cost of consumer goods made workers less a cause of fear than an object of pity.¹³

Greca and his allies within the chamber invoked numerous arguments in support of these measures: They would reduce unemployment, help prevent the discontent that led to strikes, improve workers' family life, combat alcoholism, and even preserve the well-being of the race. But Rosario's Radical deputies repeatedly emphasized the importance of legislating on behalf of working-class interests. Throughout the discussion of the child and female labor bill, debate centered not on whether workers deserved benefits of this type, but on how to frame the law such that it would not lead employers to fire women, who often needed to work in order to support their families.¹⁴ Likewise, the only resistance to the eight-hour day came from legislators who argued that the shortened day would be a burden on workers who supported themselves by working overtime.¹⁵ All of the deputies, regardless of their party affiliation, premised their arguments on the need to favor working-class interests. Given this consensus, the chamber of deputies passed both of Greca's labor bills without any significant resistance.

The passage of these reforms represented a victory for Greca's nonpartisan, de-politicized model of labor reform. Throughout the debates on the child and female labor bill and the eight-hour-day project, political party affiliations were never mentioned. The most outspoken supporters of the legislation were Radicals from Rosario and its environs, but they never identified themselves as such. Moreover,

they did not encounter significant opposition from members of the Liga del Sur, who represented the minority in the legislature. As he had in 1913, Greca explicitly described the measures as above party politics. He argued that the existence of democracy in Santa Fe positioned the province to lead the nation in “institutional progress.” As he put it, “[t]he time has come for us to pay attention to the working people [el pueblo trabajador], and the representatives of the people [el pueblo] present here must accomplish this task.”¹⁶ Democratically elected legislators, Greca believed, were the representatives not of sectors or parties, but of the entire people; it was in this capacity that they must vote for laws that would benefit workers. Two developments made this logic particularly compelling for the deputies in the provincial legislature. First, for the time being, labor unrest had ceased to be a threat in Rosario and in Santa Fe as a whole. With class conflict less visible, the notion that elected officials could represent the entire people—as opposed to specific sectoral interests—was far more plausible. The second development was Caballero’s temporary marginalization within the provincial government and within the Radical party. With the vice governor on the sidelines, Santa Fe’s legislators could trust that the labor bills were being presented as institutional reforms for the good of the nation, not as concessions aimed at winning working-class votes.

Although labor peace continued to reign in Rosario for another year, the second development that had enabled the passage of labor legislation in the chamber of deputies was quickly undone. With Ricardo Caballero as its most visible leader, a new Radical faction known as the Dissidents emerged in 1914 in outright opposition to the Menchaca administration. By facilitating Caballero’s rehabilitation as a significant force within Santa Fe politics, this schism undermined the movement to pass reformist labor legislation. Preoccupied with partisan disputes, the provincial senate never even considered Greca’s bills. In June 1914, Dissidents in the senate raised charges of electoral fraud in order to oppose the seating of a newly elected senator who was loyal to the administration.¹⁷ The Dissidents were eventually defeated in this effort but only after a long series of debates. Shortly thereafter, the senate became mired in another partisan struggle when the opposition uncovered evidence of a financial scandal in the executive branch. Allegedly, the government had put public funds into a private bank account under a pseudonym. Named for the fictitious account holder, the “Juan Machain” incident made headlines in the opposition press and preoccupied the provincial senate until the investigative commission appointed by the Radical majority exonerated the Menchaca administration of any serious wrongdoing. During the legislature’s “extraordinary period” of 1914, which lasted from September to January of the following year, provincial senators

practically ignored their legislative function and concentrated instead on these two matters.¹⁸ With the senate split hopelessly into opposing camps, unified legislative action of the kind proposed by Greca was impossible.

By reviving the threat of class politics, Caballero's presence within the leadership of the new Dissident party contributed to the legislative paralysis in the provincial senate. Greca's bills had been passed in the chamber of deputies in part because they were expected to reduce labor conflict, but they had also been defended explicitly as concessions to a deserving working class. With Caballero back on the political scene, the senators could no longer trust the nonpartisan impulse behind these labor reforms. Members of the Liga del Sur and Radicals loyal to Menchaca must now have suspected that the vice governor was trying to build a working-class following, as he had in the years before 1912 and during the strikes of 1913. With Caballerismo on the rebound, most politicians once again feared any effort to favor the working-class politically. The 1914 legislative sessions ended without any action on Greca's labor bills, and neither the senate nor the chamber of deputies would address these issues in the years that followed. The Rosarino Radicals who had embraced Greca's model of nonpartisan legislative action on behalf of the working class suddenly stopped pushing these issues. From 1915 until 1919, no significant piece of pro-labor legislation was introduced in the chamber of deputies.¹⁹ Even though a consensus continued to exist in support of progressive labor laws, the fear of class politics prevented provincial legislators from even broaching the issue. Just as they had during the strikes of 1913, politicians responded to the Caballerista threat not by passing laws that might strengthen their own pro-labor credentials, but by seeking to preserve the barrier between working-class interest and electoral politics. Faced with the prospect of class politics and the concomitant renewal of class conflict, elite politicians' commitment to the hegemonic project of nonpluralist democracy outweighed their desire to pursue their own electoral advantage.

The belief that Caballero and his followers would use legislative action to attract working-class votes even crippled reformist efforts that were not explicitly aimed at workers. From the beginning of the democratic period, politicians and observers from all parties insisted on the need to extend universal male suffrage to municipal elections. The Liga del Sur had featured this measure in its platform from the party's inception, and Menchaca placed it high on his government's agenda. Most typically, municipal electoral reform was presented as a step in the direction of progress and modernity. In addition, the measure's supporters often argued that by exercising the vote in municipal elections, citizens would learn to vote more responsibly in elections with higher stakes. In Menchaca's words, universal male suffrage on the

municipal level would serve as a "civics school."²⁰ However, when the issue was debated in the chamber of deputies in 1914, Rosario's pro-labor Radicals presented a different type of argument. On the very day that the chamber decided to give labor an official holiday, these legislators argued that municipal reform was primarily a question of enfranchising the working class. Because the existing law allowed tax-paying foreigners to vote, reform proponents could easily portray it as favoring rich immigrants over poor Argentines. In language that recalled Caballerista rhetoric, Juan Luis Ferrarotti argued that the municipal reform would break the tyranny of "the plutocracy" and install democracy: "Let us make sure that he who pays taxes with his labor and who has Argentine blood in his veins is a voter."²¹ According to this argument, being Argentine and being a worker gave one a double claim on the rights of citizenship.

In keeping with the nonpartisan spirit they had displayed in the debates on the labor reform bills, Greca and the majority of his legislative allies sought to disentangle the municipal electoral reform from party politics. By the time the issue was discussed in the chamber of deputies in 1914, the senate had already passed a version of the reform calling for the immediate dissolution of the current city councils, elected under the old system of restricted suffrage. According to their political enemies, the Radicals who controlled the senate had taken this step in order to strip the Liga del Sur of the majority it enjoyed on the Rosario council.²² Now, as the measure came before the chamber of deputies, Greca and his colleagues on the legislation committee backed the senate's version with one critical change: The bill they recommended would leave the current councils in place and simply hold upcoming elections under the reformed electoral system. Defending this revised version, Greca once again stressed the need for nonpartisan legislation: "The Radical party . . . will never abuse its legislative majority in order to dislodge an adversary who has won his elective post in a good fight."²³ Nevertheless, in the deputies' debate on the issue, several Radicals broke with Greca and pushed for the dissolution of the councils. Leading this group was Tobías Arribillaga, a deputy from Rosario who would join Caballero's camp once the schism within the Radical party had become definitive. "The people," Arribillaga declared, "have had nothing to do with the election of these councils."²⁴ This argument amounted to a defense of the political interests of the working class: The city councils should be dissolved because they had been elected without the participation of workers. And since he used this explicitly pro-labor argument to justify a measure that would hurt the Liga del Sur and benefit the Radicals, Arribillaga had clearly crossed the line into class politics. However, after a lengthy debate, Greca's nonpartisan, less inflammatory version was approved by a narrow majority, and the revised bill was sent back to the senate.²⁵

By the time the chamber of deputies passed the municipal electoral reform, the senate had become embroiled in the partisan squabbling that would characterize the remainder of the 1914 sessions. And as Caballero regained his influence within provincial politics, the bill stood little chance of getting through the senate a second time. Even though Arribillaga's attempt to dissolve the city councils had been defeated, he had injected the rights of workers into the debate on municipal reform. Associated as it now was with working-class interests, the effort to reform the municipal electoral system must have reminded many politicians of the events of the year before. Just as Caballero had attempted to transform the tramway workers' strike into a working-class protest against the Rosario City Council, Radical politicians now wanted to undo the electoral restrictions that had given the Liga del Sur its majority on that same council. Faced with what it saw as another dangerous appeal to class interest, *La Capital* denounced even Greca's modified version of the municipal reform bill as a partisan effort to unseat the Liguista councilmen.²⁶ Joined by a significant number of Radicals who turned against the measure, the Liguistas argued that it was unconstitutional to reform the municipal electoral law without first changing the provincial constitution.²⁷ But these politicians had never raised this concern in their earlier arguments for universal suffrage in municipal elections. The constitutional objection to the reform bill was most likely an *ex post facto* justification for a position that clearly contradicted the democratic ideology of both of the dominant parties. Both the Liguistas and the Radicals had, since their origins, dedicated themselves to the principle that government must truly represent the people. Yet now many of them resisted applying this principle at the municipal level because they suspected that a particular political faction would build a working-class following and take over the Rosario City Council. In other words, maintaining a restrictive electoral system seemed the only way to keep working-class interests out of municipal politics.

Both municipal electoral reform and progressive labor laws enjoyed broad support across party lines, and yet both failed to pass the legislature. Caballero's political resurgence made politicians unwilling to support legislation that they feared could be used to attract working-class support. But the legislature's failure to produce effective pro-labor action did not reflect a generalized aversion to helping the working class. On the contrary, Rosarino elites—and even politicians—were more than willing to endorse and participate in efforts to benefit workers as long as these efforts were conducted outside of the political sphere. The unemployment crisis caused by the economic downturn of 1914 is a case in point. In July of that year, rising levels of unemployment became a cause for concern in Rosario, especially when groups of poor people began to raid the city's markets for food.²⁸ *La Capital* seized the opportunity

to attack the provincial government for not attempting to ameliorate the debilitating effects of the economic crisis on the working class: "What has the government of Santa Fe thought of to try to remedy the workers' critical situation? It's painful to say it, but as yet the government has not bothered to attempt an alleviation of the problem."²⁹ But while the government remained inactive, Rosario's wealthy businessmen, undeterred by the fear of class politics, did take action.

Alarmed by the prospect of mobs of unemployed men ransacking shops and markets, the Bolsa de Comercio convened a meeting in order to discuss potential solutions to the crisis. The result was the formation of a commission charged with organizing a jobs program. Although Caballero helped organize the initial meeting and his old ally Daniel Infante played a major role on the commission, the project was explicitly nonpartisan from its inception. In addition to Rosario's municipal authorities, those present at the original meeting included representatives of the city's major industrial and commercial establishments, the management of the railroad and tramway companies, and the leaders of the major employers' organizations.³⁰ With all of these groups on board from the beginning, the emergency jobs program was untainted by any apparent political motive. As a result, the project received the backing of the Liguistas on the city council as well as the financial support of the Menchaca administration. In fact, even as Greca's labor reform bills were dying in the senate, that same body unanimously approved the allocation of one hundred thousand pesos to Rosario's nonpartisan unemployment program.³¹ This money, in addition to various private sector contributions, allowed the commission to offer road construction jobs to thousands of workers at half the normal wage.³² Even though these jobs provided only minimal relief to the city's suffering poor, they nonetheless represented an achievement that would not have been possible within the arena of party politics. Representatives, councilmen, and members of the executive supported the project because it originated outside of government and because it enjoyed the backing of a nonpartisan coalition of Rosario's elite organizations. Unlike labor legislation and municipal electoral reform, the jobs program did not appear to be aimed at attracting working-class votes to a particular party or faction. Its very existence stood in sharp contrast to the long-term paralysis that characterized the provincial legislature during this period.

Campaigning for Working-Class Votes: The Election of 1914

As the stalled legislative sessions of 1914 demonstrate, the specter of class politics exerted an influence even during times of labor peace. The fear that Caballero and

his followers might win elections by appealing specifically to the working class made most Rosarino politicians unwilling to support progressive labor laws. At the same time, these politicians faced a practical problem: How could they appeal for the votes of workers without reinforcing class divisions? The existence of a working class with distinct economic interests was almost undisputed at this time. Now that many members of this class enjoyed the right to participate in politics, how could campaigning politicians win their votes without promising to defend their class interests? In other words, what alternative was there to Caballerismo? Even before Caballero recovered from his political marginalization, the question of how parties and candidates should appeal to the working class preoccupied Rosarino politicians. In the electoral campaign of 1914, Caballero's foes distanced themselves from his political methods. Intent on avoiding the appearance of pandering to working-class interests, these politicians competed for votes by stressing their commitment to a nonsectoral politics of principle rather than by promising specific policies. In effect, the fear of class politics led politicians to forsake substantive campaigning in favor of assertions about their political style.

On 19 February 1914, ten days before the voters of Santa Fe were to elect representatives to the provincial legislature for the second time since the inauguration of competitive electoral politics, *La Capital* denounced the Menchaca administration's treatment of workers:

[T]he legitimate aspirations of the working classes have been defrauded by the failed government of Doctor Menchaca. . . . With a tax burden overloading commerce and industry or, what is the same, capital and labor, the already unbearable cost of living has had its most regrettable effects on those classes, devoid of fortune. . . . While [the government] uses words carefully chosen to produce a consoling impression in the working masses, it whips them and humiliates them . . .”³³

By arguing that Menchaca's tax increases were harmful to both capitalists and workers, the opposition newspaper tried to downplay the notion of class conflict; a fiscal policy that helped business, the paper implied, would also help the working class. But *La Capital* not only chastised the Radical government for its wrongheaded economic policy, it also criticized the administration's rhetorical techniques. In fact, *La Capital*'s preoccupation with “carefully chosen” words aimed at workers was typical of political commentary in the weeks leading up to the election. The violent strikes of 1913 had demonstrated the potential danger of pro-labor rhetoric. Now,

the Liga del Sur made this type of rhetoric a principal target of its campaign. Party leaders repeatedly claimed that the Radical government had used promises and flattery to win the votes of workers, only to break those promises once in office. Liguista campaigners and sympathizers attacked the Radicals' political style as a regression, a step backward into the corrupt traditions of Argentina's premodern past. By contrast, they aimed their own appeals at intelligent, civic-minded citizens and promised to lead the province toward progress.

Despite his ongoing feud with Governor Menchaca, Caballero did participate in the Radicals' electoral campaign. After the general strike of 1913, the vice governor's influence within the government had been so reduced that he applied for a leave from office and left the country for a period of four months.³⁴ But by the time the campaign heated up, he was back in Rosario, speaking at Radical events.³⁵ And although the extent of his participation in this campaign is unclear, Radical political strategy still bore the imprint of his influence. As in the campaign of 1912, the party's propaganda had a nationalist and criollista tint to it, and it was this aspect that drew the most severe criticism from the Liga del Sur and its supporters. Before a major Radical rally in Rosario, *La Capital* scoffed at the "gauchos on horseback" who would undoubtedly lead the march. Afterward, the newspaper declared that the small size of the demonstration and the presence of people from outside the province revealed that "our working people have deserted the group." And for *La Capital*, this alleged decline in the popularity of the Radical party was an indication of the nation's progress:

All those who were not seen in the street yesterday, behind the flags and superficial symbols and attentive to the voice of the illiterate and pretentious caudillo, must meditate on the useful and productive act they would be performing if they contributed with their energies to the triumph of political organisms with realizable ideals. This is, thus, the gradual disappearance of Radicalism, the beginning of a civilized and civilizing epoch.³⁶

La Capital associated Radicalism with a politics of empty symbols and with the uneducated strongmen of Argentina's backward past. The paper claimed that Radical speakers used symbols and rhetoric not in the service of "ideals," but in order to trick unthinking voters. By emphasizing principles and progress, the Liga del Sur promised to lead the province toward a modern, civilized future.

Despite *La Capital's* assertion that Radicalism was gradually disappearing, the leaders of the Liga del Sur needed working-class votes right away. But given their condemnation of empty rhetoric and their aversion to class politics, Liguista

candidates needed to appeal to workers without directly promising to favor working-class interests. A campaign manifesto released by the Liga's committee in Rosario's eighth electoral section—a district with a relatively large working-class population—reveals a key component of the party's strategy. Addressed to the "Citizens of this electoral district," the manifesto begins by attacking the administration for not doing enough to alleviate the economic crisis affecting "the working people": "It is clear that your critical economic situation does not matter to the Radical government." According to the manifesto, the government's inaction represented a broken campaign promise to workers, who were led to believe that a Radical government would help them. The Radicals' failure to fulfill their promises revealed their attitude toward the workers whose votes they sought.

To top it all off, and with admirable candor, today [the Radical party] invites you to join it again in the election, as if you were a herd, disposed to servility . . . when in truth, you are capable citizens, worthy of respect, conscious of your rights and duties, and in your Argentine souls beats the national feeling which condemns and rejects oligarchic nepotisms . . .³⁷

The Liguistas, then, claimed to respect workers as competent citizens capable of perceiving and voting in accord with the good of the nation. They contrasted this respect with the allegedly disdainful attitude of the Radicals, who expected workers to vote as a servile, unthinking mass, willing to support any politician who promised to defend their interests. Instead of countering Caballerismo with pro-labor promises of their own, the Liguistas emphasized their respect for the members of the working class. The implied argument was that workers should vote for the Liga del Sur because it offered them membership in the national community of intelligent and capable citizens.

Echoing the Liga's official rhetoric, *La Capital* emphasized the intellectual nature of the party's political appeals: "The Liga del Sur is the only party that bases its action on doctrinal propaganda; it does not seek proselytes, it educates the citizen and solicits his adhesion by convincing him."³⁸ In their attempt to remove working-class interests from political discourse, the party's speakers set up an opposition between a high-minded politics of ideas on the one hand and opportunistic pandering on the other. Unlike the Radicals, who allegedly used symbols and rhetoric to manipulate naive voters, the Liga's campaigners pledged to stick to the political high road of intellectual persuasion. Ironically, this insistence on a principled political style actually stripped the campaign of much of its substance. The Liguistas appealed for votes not by promising to pursue policies that would benefit specific groups of voters, but

rather by presenting themselves as the party of ideas and intellect. In other words, the Liguistas expected voters to choose the party's candidates not because of the ideas they represented, but because of the mere fact that they had ideas.

The logic of Liguista propaganda cast the 1914 election as a test of the intellect and capacity of Santa Fe's citizens. Avoiding any appeal to specific classes or sectors, the Liguistas appealed instead to all voters as citizens who shared a common set of interests. The party's supporters argued that capable intelligent voters would be unmoved by the Radicals' emotional appeals and would choose the party of principle. This vision of democratic politics meant that the outcome of the election would be determined by the quality of the electorate. Only a person incapable of overcoming his selfish interests or of seeing beyond empty rhetoric would vote for the Radicals. As *La Capital* put it on the day of the balloting, "[I]t is up to the people of the province of Santa Fe to prove to the whole country that they think and reason, that they are not an unconscious mass, susceptible to the influence of sonorous words, without practical sense."³⁹ In this view, the election of 1914 would reveal whether Santa Fe's voters were truly capable of participating in a democracy.

As the election results demonstrate, the Liga's strategy of presenting itself as the party of principle failed to sway the electorate. The Radicals won easily throughout the province, receiving a large majority in Rosario, where support for the Liga had always been strongest. The Radicals took all ten of the city's electoral districts and obtained 58 percent of the votes in the department as a whole, compared to 39 percent for the Liga. Predictably, the Liga's supporters explained this poor showing by arguing that voters had not yet evolved into responsible, civic-minded citizens. Still, they remained confident that "the Rosarino people are capable of the greatest civilizing advances in the field of democracy."⁴⁰ The Liga del Sur would eventually win if it continued "to teach the people true democratic morality, which consists not in defending words, but in realizing the essence of those words."⁴¹ For his part, Governor Menchaca celebrated the fact that "democracy has taken deep root in our soil."⁴² Both victors and vanquished agreed that Rosarino voters were evolving toward an ideal citizenship; the winners claimed that this process had nearly reached its end, while the losers emphasized how far the people still had to go.

Caudillismo and Class Politics: The Election of 1916

Between 1914 and 1916, two new parties emerged to compete in Rosario politics. The first of these was the Dissident Radical party. In 1912, the various factions within Santa Fe Radicalism had forged an uneasy alliance in support of the Menchaca/Caballero ticket. After the vice governor's actions during the strikes of 1913, whatever

tensions had already existed turned into outright hostility. Although the Radicals managed to present a united front for the 1914 campaign, by the middle of the year two distinct factions had emerged in Rosario: those who supported Caballero and those who remained loyal to the governor. The Radical infighting in the provincial senate broke down along these lines, and the Caballeristas eagerly joined the Liga del Sur in condemning the administration for its actions in the "Juan Machain" corruption scandal. In October, Menchaca began to move against government appointees suspected of Caballerista sympathies, a campaign that culminated in the firing of Rosario's chief of police, Jorge Raúl Rodríguez.⁴³ In response to this offensive, the governing board (*junta de gobierno*) of the Santa Fe Radical Party released a manifesto declaring its opposition to the government, which it accused of abandoning Radical principles. Many of Rosario's Radical clubs joined the board in this action, and the Dissident

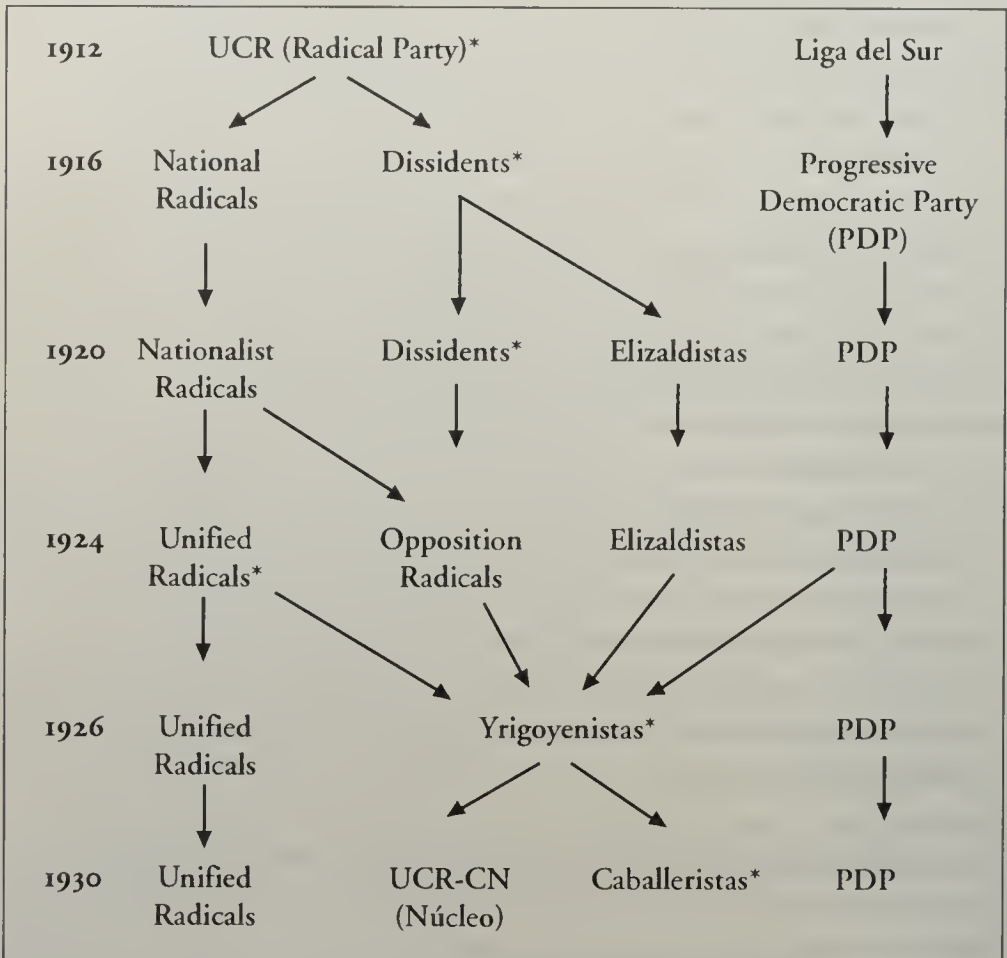


Figure 1. Major political parties: Santa Fe Province, 1912–1930.

*Parties that Ricardo Caballero belonged to or supported. Chart by Matthew Karush.

Radical party was born.⁴⁴ Despite the efforts of the UCR's national committee to heal the rift in Santa Fe, by 1916 the province had two Radical parties, with two separate committee structures and two distinct slates of candidates.

The Dissident party was itself an alliance of several anti-Menchaca groups: Joining Caballero and his supporters in Rosario were several Radical factions from northern Santa Fe. As future developments would reveal, these disparate factions united more for the sake of electoral convenience than out of any shared ideology. Mindful of Caballero's ability to win workers' votes in Rosario, many Dissidents simply guessed that the new faction would be able to defeat the government's party at the polls. In November 1915, the Dissidents held their convention, naming Rodolfo Lehmann, a wealthy landowner and businessman from the northern city of Esperanza, as their candidate for governor. As candidate for vice governor, the party chose Francisco Elizalde, a well-to-do Rosarino merchant and longtime member of the city's *Bolsa de Comercio*.⁴⁵ Although the Caballeristas were not directly represented in this ticket, they nevertheless remained a strong force within the party.

The second new party in Rosario politics, the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), was the brainchild of Lisandro de la Torre, the founder and leader of the *Liga del Sur*. Planning to vie for the presidency in 1916, de la Torre hoped to forge a coalition out of the various conservative parties that continued to exist in the Argentine provinces. De la Torre's dream of a truly national party was foiled when Marcelino Ugarte, the governor of Buenos Aires and the leader of that province's Conservative Party, refused to join.⁴⁶ Still, the Rosarino politician was able to create a significant new political force and to launch a serious presidential campaign. In Santa Fe, the PDP replaced the *Liga del Sur* and also absorbed what was left of the province's old conservative parties from the pre-1912 period. Thus, as the provincial and national elections of 1916 neared, three parties competed in Santa Fe: the Radicals, the Dissidents, and the PDP.

During the 1916 campaign, none of these three parties distinguished itself programmatically from its competitors. Just as they had in 1914, most politicians downplayed their parties' specific proposals and instead emphasized their commitment to a politics of principle. Moreover, the three major parties presented nearly identical platforms. The Radicals, Dissidents, and Progressive Democrats all promised to pursue a constitutional reform that would apply universal suffrage to municipal elections and make the positions of mayor and justice of the peace elected offices instead of executive appointments. They also all pledged to pass laws that would, as the Dissidents put it, "harmonize relations between capital and labor." Similarly, both the Dissidents and the PDP called for reform of the Provincial Bank and for the expropriation and redistribution of uncultivated land from large landowners, while both the Radicals

and the PDP called for elective local school boards.⁴⁷

Despite this convergence on questions of policy, campaigning politicians repeatedly mentioned their parties' platforms on the stump. But instead of focusing on substantive proposals, campaigners pointed to the platforms as evidence of their commitment to an intellectual political style. For example, one PDP campaign leaflet urged voters to read the party's program:

We understand ourselves to be addressing a conscious voter; and in this way we appeal to his patriotic discretion. It is easy to excite voters' emotions [*excitar los ánimos*] with music and speeches, but it is more noble and more useful to stimulate their intelligence. If you are capable of understanding propaganda of this nature, read the documents. The program contains the thinking of eminent Argentines who have articulated the reforms that in their judgment are demanded by our democracy in this moment. . . . Voting is a lofty responsibility of citizens. May you know how to fulfill it with intelligence and patriotism.⁴⁸

Like the Liga two years before, the PDP differentiated itself from the opposition not by the policies it proposed, but by presenting itself as a principled party committed to winning votes through intellectual persuasion. By contrast, the leaflet implied, the party's competitors swayed unthinking voters with "music and speeches." Moreover, the PDP did not ask citizens to read the platform so that they might find policy proposals that served their interests. Rather, the party's platform was designed to respond to the needs of the nation; patriotic and intelligent voters would cast their ballots with this lofty goal in mind. In the end, this was the most basic distinction the PDP drew between itself and its competition: While other parties appealed to ignorant or selfish voters, Progressive Democratic voters were intelligent, capable citizens. And just as it had before the 1914 election, *La Capital* argued optimistically that the PDP would win because capable citizens represented a majority in Rosario.⁴⁹

PDP campaigners emphasized the party's intellectual political style even in their direct appeals to workers. Rather than counter Caballerismo by promising more concessions to labor, the party's candidates attacked the Caballeristas for pandering. During the 1916 campaign, the PDP's efforts to attract working-class votes were led by José Guillermo Bertotto, a former member of Rosario's tiny Socialist Party now running for provincial deputy as a Progressive Democrat. Bertotto began one speech in the working-class neighborhood of Talleres by pledging to introduce a series of pro-labor reform bills. But these proposals—among them an eight-hour-day

measure and a reduction in taxes on commerce and industry intended to lower the price of consumer goods—were hardly a radical departure from the policies supported by the other parties. Instead, the centerpiece of Bertotto's speech was a critique of Caballerista political style. The candidate argued that legislators must be intellectuals; those who said otherwise were condescending to the electorate, using "the weak argument that the most illiterate are the closest to the people." Bertotto scoffed at candidates who appeared at campaign rallies wearing gaucho attire, in order to appeal to impressionable voters:

[T]he Dissidents intend to elevate those who are most capable of wearing a *chiripá* [leather apron worn over gaucho's pants] or of commanding [*acaudillar*] ignorant masses. The [Progressive] Democratic candidates and the entire party have a more elevated concept of their function as citizens who respond to ideas and ideals; and it is for that reason that we ascend the podium in order to expound our principles and show ourselves as we are.⁵⁰

Bertotto, like other PDP campaigners, emphasized his party's commitment to ideas, its insistence on appealing to intelligent voters. And he contrasted this approach to the criollista demagoguery of the Caballeristas. Caballero and his followers, Bertotto argued, cynically manipulated "ignorant" voters by invoking the symbols of Argentina's criollo traditions.

Throughout the 1916 campaign, PDP supporters continued to attack the Caballeristas for their use of empty rhetoric as well as for their celebration of Argentina's rural past. In one article, *La Capital* declared its adhesion to an intellectual mode of political activity: "We will reconcile the beauty of the form with the substance of the idea. And in case of preferring one virtue over the other we will opt for the second." This decision to privilege the intellectual represented a step away from a backward past, a step that Caballero's followers were allegedly unwilling to take:

Two great groups fight over the electorate. One without any intention of departing from the old—we would say decrepit—system . . . the new one freeing itself from the burden of prejudices and obstacles. While Radicalism persists in sharpening its genius for the clever criollo practices filed away in *Martín Fierro*, the Progressive Democrats take what is respectable from the past. They recall Echeverría, Moreno, Rivadavia, Sarmiento and Alberdi in order to combine their humanitarian lessons with those of modern statesmen, politicians and educators.⁵¹

As this passage demonstrates, PDP candidates and their supporters associated the party's political style with a particular vision of Argentine history. Whereas Caballero and his followers glorified the rural gauchos and caudillos of an earlier era, Progressive Democrats saw themselves as the heirs to a very distinct, urban, intellectual tradition stretching back to the nation's founding fathers. Drawing on this tradition, while rejecting what they saw as the uncivilized elements of the past, would enable them to lead the nation toward modernity and progress.

PDP campaigners linked Caballerista criollismo with the corrupt political practices of the period before 1912. They argued that before the Sáenz Peña Law, Argentine politics consisted of an unprincipled system of clientelism and patronage. Political bosses bought off the support of ignorant voters by promising jobs and favors or by threatening punishment. In PDP rhetoric, this old form of politics, commonly known as caudillismo or *política criolla*, represented the ultimate evil. The party's vision of a politics of principle was intended to replace this corrupt and "personalist" system, in which voters chose a party not on the basis of its ideas but out of loyalty to a particular candidate or in exchange for favors. The PDP would teach voters how to participate in a modern democracy. As *La Capital* put it, the party was a "school of civic education . . . free of prejudices and of caudillista or retrograde customs."⁵² And while Progressive Democrats sought to educate the electorate, the party's speakers attacked the Radicals—both the Dissidents and those who supported the Menchaca administration—for continuing to operate within the logic of caudillismo. Caballero's celebration of criollo traditions lent a certain plausibility to this charge. As the Dissident leader sang the praises of the old caudillos, he seemed to corroborate the claim that his party remained committed to old-fashioned, clientelist practices, instead of the more "advanced," intellectual political style favored by the PDP. Progressive Democrats made this connection between Caballero's criollismo and the Radicals' alleged caudillista politics even more explicit by referring to the latter as "gaucho government" or "gauchocracy."⁵³

But the PDP did not have a monopoly on anticaudillismo rhetoric. On the contrary, all of the major parties attacked clientelist and personalist politics and, at least rhetorically, committed themselves to a politics of principle. Menchaca, for one, repeatedly promised to campaign on the strength of his party's ideas.⁵⁴ Likewise, Alcides Greca, who remained loyal to Menchaca, defended his legislative proposals as ideas conceived not in order to buy off the votes of any particular sector, but to bring about progress for the nation as a whole. For their part, the Dissidents attacked Menchaca for his alleged "personalist politics," his tendency to distribute patronage jobs to his loyal friends.⁵⁵ In terms strikingly similar to those employed by the PDP,

one typical Dissident manifesto accused the administration of reverting to the corrupt political style of the predemocracy years. The document concluded by calling on voters to defeat “the reigning caudillismo.”⁵⁶ Even the Argentine Socialist Party, a minor presence in Rosario, had long advocated a politics of ideas.⁵⁷ Perhaps more surprising, the anarchist newspaper *La Rebelión* also attacked caudillismo, and it did so in language reminiscent of *La Capital*:

In order to capture the crowds there is nothing better than to lie often and well; there is nothing better than to prophesize fortunes, successes, happiness; there is nothing better than to promise manna in the short term. It is not important to forge consciousness, create values, awaken energies; what matters is to make noise, entertain the popular imagination, convert multitudes and lead them wherever and however.⁵⁸

Anarchists, then, joined with Radicals, Progressive Democrats, and Socialists in condemning the intellectually impoverished appeals of clientelist politicians.

To a certain extent, this rhetoric painted an accurate picture of Argentine politics. The introduction of universal male suffrage in 1912 failed to eradicate the old clientelist mechanisms of voter recruitment. Just as all political parties denounced caudillismo rhetorically, they all participated in it to some extent. Certainly, many political traditions from the predemocratic era survived in the years after 1912. For example, party operatives continued the old practice of driving voters directly to the polls on election day. Even though there is no hard evidence of coercion or bribery in these encounters, a certain degree of influence seems likely. At the very least, this practice suggests that the parties did not trust citizens to vote on their own. Likewise, during the days before each election, even the “principled” PDP attracted voters to its committee meetings by offering a “succulent criollo lunch.”⁵⁹ Giving away food to poor voters does not quite constitute clientelism or vote buying, but it does reveal the party’s willingness to use techniques other than intellectual persuasion to win over voters. In addition to these quaint practices, the parties continued to distribute jobs and other patronage as a means of securing electoral support. While they disavowed clientelism in their public pronouncements, politicians were far more forthcoming in private. In a letter to Juan Cepeda, a prominent anti-Dissident Radical and president of the provincial senate, Cepeda’s political ally, B. L. Barreto, spoke openly about the need to distribute patronage jobs to “our friends.”⁶⁰ And there is no reason to think that the practice of rewarding loyal followers was limited to this one party.

Still, the depiction of politics in this era as completely dominated by unscrupulous caudillos is misleading. Even if clientelism and arm-twisting continued unabated during the democratic period, these were no longer the only techniques employed by political candidates and parties. Before the Sáenz Peña Law, politicians were able to use patronage and electoral fraud in order to control a relatively small number of voters.⁶¹ But by imposing the secret ballot, reducing the potential for fraud and, most important, transforming both the size and social composition of the electorate, the 1912 electoral reforms forced politicians to operate in an environment in which these methods could no longer guarantee electoral victory. By 1916, the secret ballot had been adopted in provincial elections, and the election-day turnout in the Department of Rosario had climbed to 20,890.⁶² Since the 1910 census registered only 3,227 adult, male property owners of Argentine nationality in the city, many of these voters had to have come from lower down on the socioeconomic ladder.⁶³ While working-class voters would certainly have been receptive to patronage—for example, some of the municipal sanitation workers who struck in 1913 must have owed their jobs to the province's new Radical government—the distribution of jobs and favors could not, by itself, buy an electoral majority. Moreover, the secrecy of the vote made it impossible for politicians to know whether job recipients were voting as told.⁶⁴

In the era of mass politics inaugurated by the Sáenz Peña Law, clientelist political techniques and intellectual persuasion were not mutually exclusive activities; in fact, these two political modes coexisted. Even as many of Rosario's politicians pressured voters or tried to buy their support, these same politicians also spent a great deal of time and effort trying to convince voters to choose their party willingly. The public nature of the period's hard-fought political campaigns suggests that propaganda and stump speeches played at least as great a role in the parties' efforts as did backroom deal making. Each of the city's major parties had at least one sympathetic newspaper that specialized in producing articles lauding the party's representatives and attacking their opponents. Moreover, during campaign seasons the parties held an impressive number of rallies, marches, and demonstrations. According to listings that appeared in *La Capital*, the PDP held thirty rallies throughout the city in the final nine days of campaigning before the provincial election of 1916, while the Socialists held sixteen demonstrations during the same period. Similarly, the paper listed twenty-three Radical party rallies in the last two weeks before the election of 1918.⁶⁵

During the biannual political campaigns, partisan rallies were held in every neighborhood in Rosario. And at all of these campaign events, regardless of the party

holding them, political speeches were the main activity. According to *La Capital*, an average of seven party leaders spoke at each of the Radical demonstrations in 1918, a figure that did not set them apart from the other parties. All of this speech making suggests that Rosarino politicians did attempt to win over voters through intellectual argument. Of course, these rallies may have contained elements of clientelism. Behind the scenes, political bosses may well have been offering jobs and favors to potential voters who, in turn, may only have attended the rallies out of a desire for a free lunch. But at the same time, these public campaign events had a different intent: They served fundamentally as a forum for the parties to introduce their candidates to the electorate and to give voters a reason to cast their ballots one way rather than another. Electoral reform did not eradicate clientelism, but it did force politicians to complement their old techniques with a serious effort at intellectual, or at least verbal, persuasion.

But if new political realities were forcing all the major parties to pursue voters through speech making, why did caudillismo remain such an omnipresent theme in political discourse? What accounts for the persistent efforts of politicians to distance themselves from this old-fashioned political style while attributing it to the opposition? On closer examination, the rhetoric of caudillismo reveals a deep anxiety in the face of fundamental changes in the Argentine political system. The introduction of mass politics brought politicians face to face with the potentially dangerous consequences of an enfranchised working class. The denunciation of caudillismo and the insistence on a politics of ideas reflected the ongoing struggle to keep working-class interests out of the political arena. In attacking their opponents as caudillos, politicians were applying an old vocabulary to a new phenomenon. They drew an analogy between promising benefits or favors to individual voters on the one hand and promising to defend the interests of a particular class of voters on the other. In this way, they sought to discredit a threatening, new political technique by associating it with the corrupt methods of a backward predemocratic era. Just as a caudillo might have pledged to give a voter a job in payment for his support, Caballero promised potential supporters that he would defend them against the wealthy. Caballero's opponents insisted that political appeals be intellectual in order to prevent any attempt to mobilize the working class. A politics of ideas was a de-classed politics, in which capable citizens chose the party whose program would best serve the nation as a whole. Caballero threatened this model by putting workers' interests over those of the rest of the nation and by using an emotional rhetoric that excited working-class voters instead of appealing to their calm rationality.

Although Caballero did occasionally modify his rhetoric in response to the dominant political discourse, he and his followers continued to employ an overt class

politics. In a speech given in May 1915 at a ceremony commemorating the late Ricardo Núñez, Caballero revised his view of Núñez's actions as chief of police during the 1913 strikes. This great Radical, he now claimed, had respected and preserved the workers' right to strike: "Thanks to his disinterested action . . . no political force was able to channel that great movement of proletarian protest for its own advantage."⁶⁶ Conveniently forgetting his own efforts to manipulate the tramway workers' strike, Caballero now accepted the impropriety of such actions. However, in this same speech, Caballero reaffirmed his commitment to a politics based on championing working-class interests. He denounced inequality and called on government to bring about a more just society: "The enormous masses who have no means of support other than their arms lie chained to the law, which should be the instrument of their liberation." True Radicalism, he argued "considers that the State's reason for being is that there are weak people to protect, injustices to abolish."⁶⁷ By asserting that the principal role of government was to defend the interests of poor people, Caballero continued to offer a stark alternative to the dominant ideal of a nonsectoral "politics of principles."

Following their leader's suggestion, some Caballeristas explicitly depicted the 1916 election as a struggle between the rich and the poor. In a series of articles in a Rosario newspaper, Caballero's friend and ally Daniel Infante argued that the city's poor should cast their ballots for the Dissident Radicals. In Rosario's municipal government, Infante declared, PDP councilmen had revealed "their servility in attending to the interests of the rich classes and forgetting those of the poor classes."⁶⁸ At the same time, the current administration had failed to achieve anything for poor people. He called for the Socialist Party—a minor electoral force in Rosario—to join the Dissidents in the name of "the union of all the poor."⁶⁹ Infante also countered PDP propaganda with a bit of anti-intellectual rhetoric. Admitting that Lehmann and Elizalde, the Dissident candidates for governor and vice governor, were not great thinkers, he argued that politicians need not "flaunt the title of doctor. . . . Common sense and good will are enough."⁷⁰ After four years of bad government, Infante declared, working-class voters were understandably suspicious of intellectuals.

Caballerista rhetoric, though, was not characteristic of the Dissident party as a whole. While Caballero and his allies enjoyed a large presence in Rosario, their influence was far more limited in other parts of the province. Many Dissident leaders, including Rodolfo Lehmann, the party's gubernatorial candidate, were as vehement in their denunciation of caudillismo as the PDP. These politicians had joined with Caballero because they shared his opposition to the Menchaca government and because they hoped his popularity with Rosario's workers might help them win the election. This strategic alliance, which foreshadowed similarly motivated alliances in

later years, bore immediate fruit. The Dissident faction won the provincial election, making Lehmann the next governor of Santa Fe. Within the department of Rosario, Caballero's stronghold, the Dissidents won a plurality with 39 percent of the vote, narrowly edging out the PDP's total of 37 percent. Menchaca's Radicals finished a distant third with 17 percent (see table 2).

Table 2. Provincial Election Results
in the Department of Rosario, 1914 and 1916

1916 Party (1914 Party)	1914	1916
PDP (Liga del Sur)	6,835 (39%)	7,829 (37%)
Menchaquistas (UCR)	10,034 (58%)	3,573 (17%)
Dissidents		8,097 (39%)
Total votes cast	17,450	20,890

Sources: *La Capital*, 2 March 1914, 6; 7 February 1916, 6.

Note: The totals do not add up because I have left out blank votes, votes for the Socialist Party, and votes for candidates labeled "various." For this same reason, the percentages do not add up to 100.

Although the cross-class composition of Rosario's electoral districts makes it impossible to chart the voting preferences of workers, the overall numbers do allow some inferences. Comparing the 1916 results with the electoral outcome of 1914 reveals that the PDP received almost exactly the same portion of the Rosario vote as the Liga del Sur had two years before (see table 2). Meanwhile, the Dissidents captured over two-thirds of what had been the Radical vote. That these voters abandoned Menchaca's faction might be attributed in part to disillusionment with the last four years of Radical government. But that they joined the Dissident Radicals, rather than jumping over to de la Torre's new party, suggests that Caballerismo continued to win over voters. Given the class content of Caballero's appeals, it seems likely that many of his supporters considered themselves members of the working class.⁷¹ To many of these voters, Caballero's class-tinged invocations of gaucho heroes probably held more appeal than the PDP's comparatively dry rhetoric about capable citizens and an unselfish politics of ideas.⁷² At the very least, the fact that the Caballeristas achieved these results well over a year after Governor Menchaca had begun dismissing them from their official posts suggests that their success did not depend exclusively on their ability to distribute government jobs.

Two months after the provincial election, Argentine voters returned to the polls to elect a president and national deputies. In Rosario, this second round of voting produced a nearly identical outcome; once again, the Dissidents narrowly defeated the PDP, while the officialist Radicals finished far behind.⁷³ As in the provincial election, the victory in Rosario helped the Dissidents capture Santa Fe province as a whole, giving the party nineteen votes in the electoral college that would pick the nation's new president. But which way these Dissident electors would vote was far from clear. Relations between the Dissidents and the national Radical committee had been strained ever since the latter had sided with Menchaca's wing of the party. As a result, the Dissidents were unable to reach a consensus on whether or not to support Hipólito Yrigoyen, the national Radical party's candidate for president. After some wavering on the issue, Caballero argued that the party should in fact support the Radical candidate. Meanwhile, Lehmann and Elizalde—Santa Fe's recently elected governor and vice governor—opposed this recommendation, arguing that since Yrigoyen had opposed the Dissidents, they should repay him in kind. After the election, electoral mathematics gave this internal conflict national significance. For Yrigoyen to obtain a clear majority over the PDP candidate, de la Torre, he needed the Santa Fe Dissidents' nineteen electoral votes. After several months of wrangling, Caballero was finally able to convince the Dissident electors to support the Radical ticket, and Yrigoyen became Argentina's first democratically elected president.⁷⁴

The struggle over whether to support the Yrigoyen ticket revealed that the Dissident Radical party represented little more than an alliance of convenience. The appearance of internal divisions so soon after the Dissidents had participated in their first election suggested that the party was not as unified as it might have appeared. Although Lehmann and Caballero did manage to mend their differences, Elizalde resigned as vice governor because of his bitter opposition to Yrigoyen and, by extension, to Caballero. Within two years, he would resurface as the leader of an anti-Caballerista wing of the Dissident party. But for now, Caballero emerged from the conflict of 1916 as the most powerful figure in Rosario politics.⁷⁵ His perceived ability to deliver votes enabled him to convince the Dissident electors to do as he wished and made Lehmann loathe to challenge him. Knowing that he needed the support of the Rosario Dissidents Caballero controlled, the new governor gave in to Caballero's wishes, alienating his running mate.

In fact, 1916 probably represented the apex of Caballero's political power. Not only had he helped create a new party that now controlled the provincial government, but he had also played a critical role in electing the nation's president. Still, Caballero's political leverage was more tenuous than it appeared. In order to recover the influence

he had lost after his break with Menchaca, he had had to forge an alliance with groups outside of Rosario, groups who were liable to rethink their commitment to him should the provincial political situation change. Even within Rosario, Caballero's political style put him at odds with the majority of politicians, regardless of party. During the campaigns of 1914 and 1916, virtually all of the city's politicians had distanced themselves from criollista class politics. They had denounced appeals to working-class interest and celebrations of criollo tradition as remnants of the old undemocratic system of caudillismo and had called instead for a de-classed politics of ideas. Moreover, Governor Lehmann and other Dissidents had proven just as committed to this doctrine as any other politician. Over the next few years, Caballero tried to walk a fine line, pursuing his class-based political strategy while at the same time maintaining an alliance with politicians who feared the consequences of his actions.

Politics and the Port Workers' Strike of 1915

Between 1913 and 1916, Rosario experienced an extended period of almost uninterrupted labor peace. Yet even as the threat of labor violence and social chaos receded in the popular imagination, the specter of class politics continued to grip the city's politicians. Fearing any direct appeal to workers or any campaign promise that privileged working-class interests, politicians attacked these approaches as a return to the backward system of caudillismo. In their place, most politicians offered a commitment to an intellectual, supposedly advanced political style that respected all voters as capable citizens. This approach stripped politics of substance and gave Caballero the opening he needed to recapture political power. More important, Rosarino politicians failed to solve the fundamental problem of how to incorporate workers into the democratic party system, a failure that would become clear as Rosario's labor peace began to unravel.

The first sign of a possible resurgence in the labor movement came in the final year of Menchaca's term. On 16 October 1915, members of Rosario's port workers union walked off the job to protest a schedule change imposed by the employers' organization, the Society to Protect Free Labor (SPTL).⁷⁶ Since it threatened the smooth operation of the city's export business, the strike immediately drew the attention of the municipal and provincial authorities, the press, and the merchants of the Bolsa de Comercio. Although the port workers' initial demand was that their customary half-hour lunch break be reinstated, it soon became clear that the strikers' anger was directed at the whole system by which the SPTL regulated work at the docks. The latter organization was committed to defending the interests of the railroads, maritime agents, and exporters, a commitment that entailed

cracking down on the labor activists it labeled “outside agitators” and organizing a company union whose affiliates were given preferential treatment in hiring. As the strike wore on, the workers declared that they would return to the docks only if the SPTL renounced its activities. For its part, the employers’ organization rejected this demand and focused on recruiting scab labor in order to keep the port running while the strike lasted.

The port workers may well have been encouraged to strike by politicians looking to win votes. Two months before the walkout, the SPTL had denounced the presence of certain “political elements” who were spreading partisan propaganda among the workers on the docks.⁷⁷ When the strike movement finally collapsed after more than two weeks, the local anarchist union federation (now known as the FOR) blamed the defeat on the fact that the strike had been politically motivated from the beginning.⁷⁸ If these assertions were correct and certain politicians had indeed helped foment the strike with the intention of using it for political advantage, it might explain why the workers chose this particular moment to protest a state of affairs that had long existed at the port. After all, with unemployment still high and scab labor readily available, the union’s leverage was low. In any case, once the strike was under way politicians and government officials quickly became involved. At the beginning of the conflict, the police closed the strikers’ meeting places, charging that labor leaders were trying to spread “revolutionary propaganda.” In addition, a large contingent of the city’s “security squadron” was stationed at the docks in order to prevent the strikers from harassing replacement workers.⁷⁹ Within a week after the walkout, however, the municipal authorities seem to have taken a more conciliatory attitude. The chief of police oversaw a series of negotiations between a workers’ commission and employer representatives at the Bolsa de Comercio. Although the talks ended in a deadlock, at least one of the strikers’ manifestos portrayed the police chief as sympathetic to labor’s cause.⁸⁰

Twelve days into the strike, Governor Menchaca sent Finance Minister Italo Bonacossa to Rosario in order to oversee the negotiations. Apparently, the governor had ordered Bonacossa to take a favorable stance toward labor. Within a day after the minister’s arrival, he and the chief of police reopened the union hall, allowing the strikers to meet for the first time since the walkout began. Furthermore, Bonacossa, who remained in contact with Menchaca throughout the conflict, informed the leaders of the SPTL that the governor wanted the strike over and expected the employers to make a deal with the port workers.⁸¹ Despite this pressure, the SPTL remained intransigent, refusing to offer any concessions other than a promise to rehire the striking workers as they were needed. As the port workers grew desperate, the FOR

called on its member unions to launch a solidarity strike in order to increase the pressure on the employers. But with unemployment still high, most workers were not willing to risk their jobs. After the failure of this attempted general strike and with the SPTL showing no signs of giving in, the port workers went back to work.⁸² Rosario's first significant strike in over two years had ended in a decisive defeat for labor.

The 1915 port workers conflict took on political significance when Governor Menchaca fired Rosario's mayor, Miguel Culaciati, less than a week after the end of the strike. The governor justified the firing by arguing that Culaciati had not done enough to facilitate the resolution of the conflict. In response, the government's critics, led by a special commission appointed by the PDP-controlled city council, denounced Menchaca for what they saw as an illegitimate attack on Rosario's municipal autonomy. They argued that Culaciati had been fired because he refused to take part in the governor's scheme to exploit the port workers strike for political advantage.⁸³ There is, in fact, some evidence to suggest that the mayor had not been friendly to the strikers. In a protest rally held after the defeat of the strike, the port workers identified Culaciati along with the SPTL as the principal enemies of the movement.⁸⁴ Moreover, the mayor was conspicuously absent during Bonacossa's efforts to negotiate a settlement. Still, less than two years earlier, Culaciati had been one of the most outspoken supporters of the pro-labor legislation introduced in the chamber of deputies by Alcides Greca. Most likely, Culaciati had not abandoned his commitment to helping the cause of the working class. Like Greca, though, he wanted to help workers through nonpartisan legislative efforts, not through Caballero-style class politics.

Culaciati's dismissal suggests that despite Menchaca's frequent attacks on Caballero, the governor was at times willing to use some of his former ally's methods. With just three months remaining before the provincial election, Menchaca may well have sensed an opportunity to attract working-class votes by helping the striking port workers obtain a favorable settlement. When the mayor Menchaca had appointed resisted this initiative, the governor fired him. In any case, the episode revealed how little had changed since 1913. Most politicians still considered any partisan attempt to directly favor working-class interests illegitimate. Progressive Democrats jumped at the chance to defend a political enemy such as Culaciati, because it gave them the opportunity to denounce the administration for practicing class politics. On the other hand, Menchaca's behavior suggests that even politicians who employed the rhetoric of a politics of ideas would abandon that principle in certain circumstances. In the end, they did so because they had no other effective means with which to appeal to working-class voters. With Caballero successfully campaigning as the defender of the downtrodden, Menchaca felt he had to do something in order to curry favor with labor.

When his scheme backfired and his party lost the 1916 election, Menchaca permitted himself a "bitter reflection":

[T]he people lack the intellectual preparation necessary to be able to appreciate the pernicious results of the venality that is unfortunately apparent in unconscious masses of citizens lacking in civic virtue who sell themselves out to the highest bidder.⁸⁵

Perhaps disingenuously, the governor explained his electoral defeat in familiar terms. His party lost, he argued, because the opposition had bought off ignorant voters, voters who were not "prepared" to fulfill their obligations as citizens in a democracy. And surely, when he spoke of buying votes, he had in mind not only the more obvious practices of electoral corruption, but also Caballero's more subtle method of securing votes by promising benefits to the working class. Falling back on the same evolutionary logic that Alberdi had used in order to justify the restriction of suffrage in the mid-nineteenth century, Menchaca argued that democracy would not function properly until the quality of the citizenry improved. In other words, Caballero could not be defeated until working-class voters got smart enough to stop voting for him. But when a new wave of labor unrest erupted in 1917, the evolutionary process seemed to reverse directions. As Rosario's workers enthusiastically joined picket lines and filled union halls, the project of turning them into citizens capable of placing civic duty above class interest seemed more hopeless than ever.

CHAPTER FIVE

Class Before Country

Labor Unrest and the Delegation of Democracy, 1917–1923

On 9 July 1917, Rosarinos filled the streets and plazas of their city in celebration of the nation's Independence Day. Describing the parades, concerts, and rallies, *La Capital* remarked that the city's residents seemed to demonstrate an enthusiasm unmatched in previous years. Encouraged by this evidence of patriotic fervor, the newspaper optimistically declared that Argentina was rapidly becoming a unified, cohesive nation: "The feeling of patriotism is taking root in the popular soul. . . . [Today] we can accurately say that the people are one, without distinction of nationalities, classes nor religion."¹ As this passage reveals, *La Capital's* editors not only believed that patriotism was gradually eclipsing the country's ethnic divisions, but also that it was overcoming class conflict, drawing a divided population together into one people. The future of Argentine democracy had long been seen to depend on the emergence of just such a unified collectivity—a citizenry that could participate in a politics geared toward the rational pursuit of the common good. And in fact, *La Capital's* sanguine predictions about the future of the nation were accompanied by a certain optimism about Argentine politics. In the weeks after Independence Day, the newspaper repeatedly pointed to a series of public debates as "healthy symptoms of a new political culture."² The Argentine people, the paper argued, were finally beginning to evolve beyond the backward, corrupt political methods of the past and toward a democratic politics of ideas.

Despite their losses at the polls, Menchaca's Radicals and de la Torre's Progressive Democrats shared *La Capital's* faith in the evolution of the electorate. They explained their defeat in the 1916 elections by arguing that voters had not yet learned to ignore appeals to their individual interests and to support high-minded parties of principle. But they continued to believe that education and experience would eventually produce a citizenry capable of nonsectoral democracy. This optimism was made possible by an extended period of labor peace, which, although briefly interrupted by the port strike of 1915, lasted through the first half of 1917. The relative lack of labor strife—compared to the unrest of the previous period—allowed politicians to imagine

that Argentina was gradually becoming a cohesive nation and that a harmonious democracy was within reach.

But labor peace and the optimism it sustained were short-lived. Just ten days after the Independence Day celebration, 2,500 workers in the FCCA railroad workshops in Rosario and the nearby town of Pérez walked off the job, launching a major railroad strike and inaugurating a five-year period of combative and often violent labor mobilization.³ Extending from such traditionally active sectors as the railroad and municipal workers to agricultural laborers in nearby rural areas, public school teachers and even the Rosario police force, this labor unrest testified to the increasing salience of working-class identity. The sight of thousands of workers marching on picket lines and destroying company property proved to many politicians and observers that workers were far from ready to relinquish their class identities in favor of a de-classed notion of citizenship. Whereas politicians had once conceived of democracy as a means of unifying the nation, they now increasingly blamed democratic politics for provoking social unrest and anarchy.

This chapter traces this growing distrust of democracy as it transformed the political process in Rosario.⁴ In the context of a massive strike wave, politicians of all the major parties rushed to distance themselves from Ricardo Caballero, whose pro-labor rhetoric seemed to provoke social disorder. Deprived of political allies, Caballero lost much of his political influence. More fundamentally, though, elites both inside and outside of politics no longer believed it was possible to turn Rosario's workers into virtuous citizens capable of pursuing the common good. Turning away from the democratic project, elites created new, nonpartisan organizations aimed at confronting the problem of class conflict outside of the realm of party politics. Likewise, a new group of politicians in control of the provincial government sought to defuse labor unrest not by effacing working-class identity but by incorporating workers into an enlarged quasi-corporatist state. Rather than expecting democracy to create a unified, harmonious nation by itself, these politicians argued that society had to be radically reorganized before democracy would function properly. This reorientation of political practice and discourse pushed workers away from the political arena, facilitated a temporary resurgence of anarchism within the labor movement, and in the long run helped solidify an antipolitical, working-class identity.

Politics Amid Conflict: Labor Unrest and the Election of 1918

The railroad strike of 1917 initiated a period of unprecedented labor mobilization in Rosario, during which workplace conflicts became dramatically more violent. To

some extent, these developments represented a return to the style of labor unrest that predominated in the early years of the century, when clashes between strikers and police were common. But the new strikes represented a decisive break from the past both in the willingness of workers to engage in acts of destructiveness and in the unions' ability to sustain a response to repression.⁵ José Domenech, who in the 1930s would become head of the national railroad union (the Unión Ferroviaria) and one of Argentina's most powerful labor leaders, described the period beginning in 1917 as a particularly violent and destructive moment within Rosario's labor history. As a union leader in the city's FCCA workshops, Domenech was a key figure in the early stages of the 1917 railroad strike. But as the unrest continued, Domenech, who was linked to the relatively moderate Socialist Party, lost his influence in the union, outflanked by anarchist activists with a more confrontational approach. Decades later, he described the atmosphere in the railroad workshops during these years:

[W]ork became anarchy. . . . [T]he people in the workshops went to work at the whistle, but they did not work. I saw, for example, ironworkers making skillets or griddles to cook meat. . . . I was no longer the idol, everyone was against me, and the strikes and work stoppages continued. . . . [T]here was a group of people who . . . beat someone up every day.⁶

According to Domenech, his moderate approach was ignored by hot-headed workers who responded violently to any perceived infraction by foremen or bosses.⁷ As is suggested by the image of ironworkers making cookware on the job, this aggressive brand of unionism gave workers a new confidence and a new degree of control over their work.

The railroad strike began as a conflict over wages, but by August 1917, the strikers' main demand was that the company rehire two union members who, in the workers' view, had been unfairly fired. In defense of this cause, thousands of workers stayed off the job and engaged in an escalating campaign of vandalism, burning railroad cars and ripping up tracks. The railroad workers gained the support not only of anarchist labor leaders, but also of Rosario's chief of police, Néstor Noriega, and of President Yrigoyen, who sent troops to the city but ordered them not to take action against the strikers. Faced with this opposition, the British railroad company gave in to the strikers' principal demand in late August.⁸ The strike's success had a galvanizing effect on unions throughout Rosario. By mid-September, the tramway workers had declared a strike as had brewery workers, glass workers, and workers in bag, textile, and sandal factories. Meanwhile, the port workers, municipal personnel, and bakery

workers all held assemblies to consider whether or not to present their own demands.⁹ By late September, Rosario's railroad workers were off the job again as part of a national railroad strike.

The strikes of 1917, part of a nationwide surge of labor unrest, were sparked by both economic and political developments. In part, they responded to a sharp drop in real wages caused by an inflationary cycle generated by World War I. At the same time, a nascent process of import substitution industrialization produced an increase in the demand for labor, thereby improving the unions' bargaining position. Once the conflicts had begun, the unions were encouraged by the sympathetic reaction of President Yrigoyen, who in the hopes of winning working-class votes, backed labor in several key strikes in 1917 and 1918.¹⁰ Within Rosario, the pro-worker politics of Ricardo Caballero also played a key role in ushering in this period of labor conflict. With Caballero's party, the Dissident Radicals, in control of the provincial government, workers must have expected the authorities to support their efforts to secure higher wages. The outcome of the initial railroad strike appeared to confirm this expectation, and workers quickly pressed their perceived advantage. The strikes immediately put Rosario's police chief in a tricky position. Appointed by the Dissident government and a friend of President Yrigoyen, Noriega needed to avoid a repressive attack on the striking workers, while at the same time allaying the fears of Rosarino businessmen accustomed to an aggressive police response to strike activity. He repeatedly assured the press of the neutrality of the police and insisted that he had no desire to attract the political support of workers.¹¹

Although *La Capital* was satisfied with Noriega's disavowal of political motivations, the newspaper retained its distrust of Caballero and his followers. As the strikes continued, the paper issued a stern rebuke to Caballerista politicians who used labor unrest to advance their own political interests:

If party representatives do not figure in strikes, they do take advantage of the opportunity, and the officialist caudillos, who dedicate themselves to exercising their influence, do tend to exploit strikes. As impartial observers, we have noticed this repellent activity by lowly politicians in recent strikes, and although we well know the level of consciousness and culture that the laboring class has attained, we think it is worthwhile to issue a warning. . . . We believe there is no greater immorality than to exploit the feelings of strikers in the service of an electoral transaction.¹²

Reiterating its familiar injunction against the political manipulation of strikes, *La Capital*

aimed its attacks at the caudillos led by Caballero, whom it now suspected of building working-class support in preparation for the elections to be held in early February 1918.¹³ Just four days before *La Capital* issued its warning, Caballero was reelected president of the Dissidents' Rosario committee, solidifying his dominance over the local branch of the party.¹⁴ With less than five months to go before the provincial election, the paper's editors feared that Caballero would repeat his performance of 1913, favoring the strikers' cause in order to win their votes and defeat the PDP. Caballero's control over the local party structure made this possibility particularly threatening.

Throughout the campaign that led up to the 1918 election, Progressive Democrats attacked the Caballeristas for attempting to win over working-class voters through false promises and empty rhetoric. As in previous elections, they derided Caballero's criollista appeals to workers as a return to the uncivilized politics of caudillismo, while boasting of their own, more intellectual political style. While the Caballeristas were "chatterers in the style of the slums [*parlanchines de corte orillero*]," PDP supporters believed their party would win because it "spends more energy civilizing our people politically."¹⁵ PDP propaganda accused the Dissidents of appealing to the lowest, most ignorant and immoral elements within the population. Just as *La Capital* had urged the striking railroad workers to ignore offers of support from meddling politicians, the paper now called on voters to rise above their most base instincts and reject the Dissidents' appeals.

Although much of the PDP's propaganda in 1918 echoed rhetoric from past campaigns, the party's speakers now added a new emphasis: They repeatedly criticized the Dissidents for what Lisandro de la Torre called their "violent language."¹⁶ "In the absence of ideas," *La Capital* declared, the Dissidents relied on "vulgar sentences, insults and words of hatred."¹⁷ In the context of an ongoing strike wave—another railroad strike erupted two weeks before election day—this harsh language seemed particularly dangerous. The Progressive Democrats feared that the Caballeristas' fiery brand of campaign rhetoric would whip their lower-class followers into a frenzy, provoking violence and social anarchy. As the campaign unfolded, violent incidents were, in fact, frequently blamed on the Caballeristas' uncivilized language. When a PDP campaign rally was broken up by a group of men firing revolvers and shouting, "Long live Caballero," party spokesmen and *La Capital* blamed the disturbance on the Dissidents' "insulting and offensive speakers."¹⁸ The newspaper argued that irresponsible speeches made by Dissident leaders predisposed the party's rank and file to violence. Caballero's opponents continued their custom of ridiculing his use of criollista images, poking fun, for instance, at his tendency to wear boots and a gaucho hat.¹⁹ But the campaign rhetoric of 1918 also explicitly associated gauchesque

culture with the threat of violent social unrest. During the campaign, *La Capital* reported on the reappearance of “gaucho banditry” in the more rural, northern part of the province and blamed this burst of criminality on “political caudillos” linked to the Dissident government.²⁰ The claim that the government’s policies had led to the rebirth of the violent gauchos of the past amounted to a transparent attempt to link Caballerista rhetoric to social disorder.

These intimations that Caballerismo would lead to violence did nothing to convince Caballero himself to change his approach. He continued to use pro-labor rhetoric and criollista images, as well as a sort of populist xenophobia in his stump speeches. A few days before the election, Caballero delivered a stinging attack on foreigners. He declared his opposition to the creation of elective school boards—a reform backed by both Progressive Democrats and non-Dissident Radicals—on the grounds that by allowing immigrants to vote in these elections, the measure would place “bits [*jirones*] of our sovereignty in foreign hands.” The Progressive Democrats, led by de la Torre, immediately attacked this xenophobic argument and leaped to the defense of Rosario’s immigrant community. But Caballero’s speech was clearly not an attack on all immigrants. Rather, his specific targets were the wealthy, tax-paying foreigners who would be allowed to participate in school board elections. In another section of the same speech, Caballero made the class character of his xenophobia clear by singling out a rich Spanish landowner for attack. Not surprisingly, it was the city’s elite merchants, and not its poor immigrants, who reacted indignantly to the speech.²¹ In the final days of the 1918 campaign, politics in Rosario came closer than ever before to polarizing along class lines: While Progressive Democrats warned that a Dissident victory would result in disorder and violence, the Caballeristas used their distinctive brand of nationalism to win over the city’s workers.

On election day, this rhetorical polarization worked in the Dissidents’ favor. In Rosario, where Caballero controlled the Dissident committees, the party secured a much easier victory than it had in 1916 (see table 3). The Dissidents defeated the PDP in Rosario by more than two thousand votes, nearly eight times the margin of victory the party had achieved two years earlier. Caballero’s party garnered 45 percent of the votes cast in the Department of Rosario, significantly higher than the 39 percent it received in 1916 and almost ten percentage points higher than the PDP total. As in the previous election, the non-Dissident Radicals—now known as the Nationalists because of their allegiance to the Radical party’s national committee—finished a distant third.²² Given the nature of the campaign, it is likely that much of the Dissidents’ electoral support came from Rosario’s workers. The party defeated the Progressive Democrats in every electoral district except sections two and three, which

were central residential zones where the percentage of wealthy voters was likely to have been higher than elsewhere. Combining the results from sections nine and ten, both heavily working-class districts, is even more suggestive. In those areas, the Dissidents defeated the PDP far more soundly than in the city as a whole, receiving 49 percent of the vote compared to the PDP's 29 percent.²³

Table 3. Provincial Election Results
in the Department of Rosario, 1916 and 1918

	1916	1918
PDP	7,829 (37%)	8,180 (36%)
Dissidents	8,097 (39%)	10,244 (45%)
Nationalist Radicals	3,573 (17%)	3,031 (13%)
Socialists	880 (4%)	939 (4%)
Total votes cast	20,890	22,997

Sources: *La Capital*, 7 February 1916, 6; 23 March 1918, 5.

Note: The totals do not add up because I have left out blank votes and votes for candidates labeled "various." For this same reason, the percentages do not add up to 100.

Several factors combined to account for the Dissidents' strong showing among working-class voters. Although the Dissident administration under Governor Lehmann could hardly be described as pro-labor, the government had made some effort to provide unemployment relief in the cities.²⁴ Moreover, Chief of Police Noriega's neutrality during the railroad strike, a stance that was heavily criticized by the British railroad company,²⁵ must have improved the government's standing among workers. Equally important, though, was the nature of the propaganda aimed at workers during the campaign. While Caballerista rhetoric dominated the Dissidents' campaign in Rosario, the Progressive Democrats proved unable to generate a novel means of winning over the city's working-class voters. PDP campaigners attacked the Dissidents for failing to follow through on their campaign promises to workers, and they criticized Caballero for pandering to workers' selfish interests instead of trying to raise them up and transform them into good citizens. PDP candidate José Guillermo Bertotto, for example, refuted Dissident posters, in which the party took credit for several pro-labor legislative initiatives. By detailing the government's failure to propose reformist laws and its tendency to persecute anarchist labor leaders,

Bertotto argued that “the Dissidents had only worried about workers insofar as they have an electoral value.”²⁶ But because the PDP remained averse to any form of class politics, these attacks on Dissident political strategy were not accompanied by positive appeals to working-class interest. As it had in 1914 and 1916, the PDP argued that workers should vote for the party that respected them enough to ignore their class interests and treat them like capable citizens. And just as it had in those previous elections, this argument rang hollow. In this context, the Dissidents—the only major party directly promising to champion working-class interests—were perfectly positioned to benefit from the recent revitalization of the labor movement and the concomitant deepening of workers’ commitment to a class-based identity.

After the election, Progressive Democrats and non-Dissident Radicals found themselves in the familiar position of having to account for their defeat. During the campaign, these politicians declared their faith in the wisdom of the electorate.²⁷ But after the Dissidents’ stunning victory, PDP supporters argued that Rosario’s workers had, in fact, been fooled: “The Dissidents have the ability to audaciously exploit workers, trick them and then present themselves again later as their saviors.” There was only one way to combat these “bad shepherds of the working people [*pueblo productor*]”:

The opposition [in the legislature] must do all that the Dissidents promised to do but did not do; and in this way, they will have proved to the electorate that authentic representatives do not need to flatter the criollos nor the disinherited in order to resolve the social questions that matter to them.²⁸

Echoing the evolutionary logic used to account for past electoral defeats, *La Capital* argued that workers could be taught to see through the false promises and pro-labor rhetoric of the Caballeristas; through a process of education and evolution, they would come to see that their interests would be better served by politicians who promised only to advance the common good.

But the 1918 election shook politicians’ faith in this process of education. More than any previous election, this race provoked the gnawing suspicion that the electorate might not be evolving in a positive direction. On the day after the election, *La Capital* interpreted the Dissidents’ victory as an indication of the limited capacities of the electorate: “The city of Rosario, especially, has had to suffer the consequences of the weight of the vote of illiterates who, really, are not guided by an ideological orientation; the majority of them obey suggestions from caudillos who are careful to keep them ignorant.”²⁹ Later, the newspaper went so far as to question the wisdom of allowing illiterates to vote, suggesting that most of the country’s problems resulted

from the failure to restrict the vote to “the most capable and enlightened.”³⁰ The new preoccupation with the votes of illiterates represented a more extreme version of the old evolutionary argument: The illiterate masses, it turned out, were hardly on the verge of becoming capable citizens. This growing pessimism was a response to the violent class conflict raging in Rosario. The unending series of strikes, like Caballero’s repeated electoral victories, constituted further evidence that workers were unable to put the common good ahead of their own class interests, that working-class identity was spreading at the expense of a nonsectoral version of citizenship. But instead of confronting the tenacity of working-class identity, politicians interpreted the Dissidents’ victory as proof of widespread ignorance; they argued that illiterate workers were easily duped by immoral caudillos. Rampant violence and social upheaval only made this ignorance seem more dangerous.

Containing the Caballerista Threat: 1918-1920

Although labor unrest temporarily abated in Rosario after the elections, the end of the year brought a new burst of strike activity.³¹ Between October 1918 and January 1919, metallurgical workers, municipal personnel, newspaper vendors, cart drivers, bakery workers, port workers, and railroad workers all launched strikes. And for the first time, this labor conflict spread into the surrounding countryside, as anarchist organizers seeking to unionize agricultural workers met with significant success. In rural areas within the Department of Rosario, as well as in the nearby Departments of General López, Constitución, and San Lorenzo, workers struck for higher wages and improved work conditions.³² In Rosario, this cycle of labor unrest reached a violent apex in December, when the city’s police went on strike to protest the provincial government’s failure to pay them several months’ worth of overdue wages. In addition to demanding their pay, the policemen insisted that the government recognize their newly formed union, and they openly identified themselves with the oppressed working class:

Considering that the policemen belong to the dispossessed class, which has common interests, from now on they will abstain from intervening in conflicts between capital and labor, and in any movement that aims at the well-being and liberty of the people.³³

Given that the police were charged with the responsibility of repressing strikes, this declaration of working-class consciousness must have been particularly threatening to wealthy Rosarinos. Also disturbing was the fact that unlike most strikers, the police

were armed. To confront this threat, the government quickly enlisted the services of police from the city of Santa Fe, as well as of army troops stationed nearby. The conflict turned bloody when a march by the strikers devolved into a violent clash between striking police and the soldiers of the eleventh infantry division, leaving at least two men dead. Within days, Rosario's anarchist labor federation declared a general strike in solidarity with the police. But despite this unprecedented alliance between the police and the labor unions, the movement was quickly defeated and all the strikers were fired.³⁴

The police conflict enabled opponents of the governing party to turn the tables on the Dissidents, attacking the government by championing the strikers' cause. Sounding very much like the Caballeristas, both anti-Dissident Radicals and Progressive Democrats portrayed the police as honorable public servants struggling on the verge of starvation, victims of an uncaring government. *La Capital* seized the opportunity to accuse the Dissidents of having tricked Rosario's workers during the campaign:

This is how the province of Santa Fe has been governed for more than two years—by men who base their electoral platforms on promises to help the workers and the poor. The memory of that noisy propaganda has passed, but in its place remains the raw and painful reality of deceit. It is necessary to say out loud that the government of Santa Fe has remained aloof from the needs of the poor.³⁵

In a published document attacking the administration's handling of the police strike, PDP legislator Enzo Bordabehere echoed *La Capital's* arguments. He denounced the government for unjustly withholding the policemen's salaries and then attacking them by force. Bordabehere described the violent encounter between strikers and soldiers as a brutal premeditated massacre of peaceful protesters.

But alongside this description, Bordabehere also claimed that the police conflict had been triggered by an earlier strike of municipal street cleaners, "the soul of which were the Dissident national deputies Dr. Ricardo Caballero and Jorge Raúl Rodríguez."³⁶ With this charge, Bordabehere suggested that Caballero's pro-labor politics—his shameless exploitation of labor conflict—had created the atmosphere in which anarchist labor mobilization could spread throughout the working class and even reach the police force. During the strike wave of late 1918 and early 1919, this type of argument became commonplace. For instance, *La Capital* described one violent episode involving disgruntled municipal workers as "the realization of the ideas and subversive practices brought by triumphant Radicalism to the spheres of

government.” According to the newspaper, both President Yrigoyen and Santa Fe’s Dissident government had exploited workers, especially public employees, buying off their loyalty to the party. In so doing, they had created the “ferment of violent anarchism.”³⁷ In other words, the Dissidents’ unscrupulous political techniques—the “violent language” they had employed in the campaign of 1918—seemed to have sown the seeds of social disorder.

During this period, the Dissidents’ opponents increasingly criticized Caballero and his allies for the lower-class status of their followers. In 1919, Caballero and one of his political allies became embroiled with several leading Progressive Democrats in a disagreement that led to a public exchange of insults and name-calling. When the Dissident leaders challenged their rivals to duels, critics ridiculed them as uncultured parvenus posing as aristocrats. “Honor is affirmed more in deeds than in gestures,” PDP deputy José Guillermo Bertotto declared, suggesting that the Dissidents should spend more time educating themselves than imitating aristocratic customs.³⁸ Similarly, another newspaper hostile to the government attacked the Caballeristas for their lack of “culture” and scoffed that “as soon as tomorrow, perhaps, they must return to their proletarian trades or to the retail counter from which they emerged by chance.”³⁹ Duels between political opponents were part of an established and respected tradition in Rosario; what offended these observers was not the idea of dueling to settle personal differences, but rather the Caballeristas’ desire to participate in a ritual that belonged to a higher social elite. But while these critics ridiculed the Caballeristas’ lack of aristocratic pedigree, they were more worried that duels would set a bad example for the Caballeristas’ lower-class following. The true proletarians were not Caballero and his allies within the Dissident party leadership, but the masses who followed these leaders. Given the growing tendency of these workers to engage in violent class protest, the Caballeristas’ enthusiasm for resolving disputes by force seemed to set a particularly dangerous precedent.

As the strike wave continued, politicians became increasingly anxious about the bond that existed between Caballero and his followers, and the image of Caballerista leaders turning the poor against their social betters became a recurring theme in political rhetoric. In a thinly veiled attack on Caballero, Bertotto told the story of “Dr. X,” a local politician who always attracted huge crowds at his rallies. According to Bertotto’s apocryphal story, a “distinguished professor” attended one of Dr. X’s public speeches to discover the basis of his popularity. After listening intently to the speech, the professor realized that his wallet had been stolen. “Now,” Bertotto concluded, “we understand the cause of such high attendance.”⁴⁰ The implication was that Caballero attracted a mass following because he appealed to poor people’s selfish desire

for self-enrichment, for stealing from the “distinguished” members of society. Less metaphorically, one newspaper hostile to the Dissidents attributed an outbreak of violence at a Caballerista rally to the inflammatory rhetoric of the speakers. According to the paper, while the Caballerista Domingo Cabanillas bitterly attacked Lisandro de la Torre, “a paisano of the mob, feeling the legendary blood of Moreira of the criollo tale pulsing in his veins,” pulled out his dagger, sparking a riot.⁴¹ This account suggested that Caballero’s rabble-rousing would create an angry mob of violent gaucho imitators.

These descriptions of Caballerismo’s potential to spark violence amounted to an attack on the people who made up Caballero’s following. Just as *La Capital* claimed that the Dissidents profited from the vote of illiterates in the 1918 election, critics now suggested that Caballero’s success was a byproduct of the inferiority of the voting masses. For example, the newspaper *La Acción* ridiculed Caballero’s assertion that he knew the “popular soul” better than the PDP leader, de la Torre: “In Haiti, for example, Dr. Caballero could perhaps be president; in the United States it is not hard to imagine them denying him entry if they were familiar with his electoral methods.” Argentine voters, it seems, ranked higher than ignorant Haitians, but they fell far short of educated North Americans. Caballero’s success, according to *La Acción*, was due to this relatively low level of civic competence. Moreover, while de la Torre tried to improve and educate voters, Caballero took advantage of their ignorance:

Nothing is simpler than to break the will of a *descamisado* [“shirtless,” or impoverished person] or bribe the conscience of a hungry person; nothing is easier also than convincing illiterates or dirty people by singing to them with a guitar or hugging them in a sign of brotherhood. But all this is nothing but inferiority. And no man who respects himself and loves his country consents to dominate “the popular soul” exploiting it in its ignorance and poverty.⁴²

The old argument that Caballero won elections by tricking the ignorant and impoverished rabble now came framed in a new, more pessimistic language. Political rhetoric increasingly highlighted the existence of a class of people within the Rosario electorate—“descamisados,” “dirty people”—who were not capable of performing their obligations as citizens.

The ongoing labor mobilization and the growing sense of alarm within Rosario’s political establishment eventually culminated in the disintegration of the Dissident party. Just as it had in 1913, the specter of class conflict led politicians to condemn Caballerismo with renewed vigor. And just as they had in 1913, politicians within

Caballero's own party joined the rush to distance themselves from him. Following the election of 1918, Rosario's branch of the Dissident party began to fall apart. Led by Francisco Elizalde, a new faction turned against the Lehmann administration and challenged Caballero's dominance within the party. The origins of this new schism can be traced back at least to 1916, when Elizalde stepped down as vice governor-elect after Caballero pushed the Dissident electors to support Yrigoyen's presidential candidacy. In July 1917, Elizalde emerged as a vocal opponent to Caballero, attacking the Dissident leader for negotiating with Enrique Mosca, a former minister in Menchaca's government and the leader of the opposition Radical party, the so-called Nationalist Radicals. Although they had been bitter opponents as recently as the 1916 election (as the Nationalists' gubernatorial candidate, Mosca had been defeated by the Dissidents), Caballero and Mosca now aimed to unite in order to improve their chances at the polls. However, as soon as the meetings between Caballero and Mosca became public, Elizalde and other Dissidents reacted with outrage; given the hostility of the last campaign, the idea of making a pact with the enemy seemed a calculated betrayal.⁴³

Thanks in part to Elizalde's opposition, the negotiations between the Dissidents and Nationalists fell apart, and the two parties confronted each other as opponents in the elections of 1918. Although the Dissidents' impressive victory in that year's balloting—and especially their success among working-class voters—might have seemed to solidify Caballero's control over the party, Elizalde quickly renewed his campaign against the Dissident leadership. The issue that would ultimately provoke a schism within the party was a dispute over Rosario's mayor, Enrique Ferreyra. A former member of the Liga del Sur, Ferreyra was a physician who had achieved a relatively high rank within the Dissident party. After serving as secretary of the party's departmental committee for Rosario, he was appointed mayor by the Lehmann administration in February 1918.⁴⁴ During the 1918 campaign, Ferreyra had earned the Caballeristas' disfavor by publicly condemning that faction's use of hostile, personal attacks against opposition candidates.⁴⁵ After the elections were over, Caballero began pressuring Lehmann to replace Ferreyra with someone more sympathetic to his group. When the governor acquiesced, asking Ferreyra to submit his resignation, an anti-Caballero faction coalesced among Rosario Dissidents. Joining Elizalde was Néstor Noriega, Rosario's chief of police, among other prominent members of the party.⁴⁶

Faced with this growing opposition, Caballero was soon outflanked within Rosario's Dissident committees. On 23 September 1918, Elizalde defeated Caballero in the internal elections for president of the party's departmental committee.⁴⁷ Caballero retained enough influence over the governor to secure Ferreyra's dismissal in

October and his replacement by the longtime Caballerista Tobías Arribillaga. But this development only deepened the schism; Noriega protested Ferreyra's firing by submitting his resignation.⁴⁸ In late October, Elizalde confirmed his control over the Rosario committees by narrowly beating Caballero in another internal election, this one to elect Rosario's delegate to the Dissidents' provincial convention.⁴⁹ By the end of the year, the Rosario Dissidents had split into two distinct parties. From his new position of dominance within the departmental committee, Elizalde led a powerful opposition to the Caballeristas (see figure 1). Caballero was not suddenly stripped of all his political influence: He continued to enjoy the backing of Governor Lehmann, and in October, the provincial legislature elected him national senator.⁵⁰ Still, Caballero's political empire had been severely diminished.

In all likelihood, Elizalde's decision to break from Caballero was motivated more by the mundane desire for political power than by the fear that his rival's pro-labor rhetoric would exacerbate class conflict. Elizalde and Noriega had already emerged as contenders for control of the Rosario Dissident party by July 1917, before the railroad strikes of that year attained serious proportions and long before the strike wave of 1918-1919.⁵¹ But the success of Elizalde's power grab was made possible by rising labor unrest. Between September 1917, when Caballero was reelected president of the Dissidents' departmental committee, and September 1918, when he lost that position to Elizalde, a majority of Dissident committee leaders became concerned about the ongoing strike wave and lost faith in Caballero's leadership of the party. The railroad conflicts attained an unprecedented level of violence in October 1917, and strikes continued sporadically throughout the year. The labor peace of the previous period had clearly come to an end, and it was easy to blame this development on the change in government: The Yrigoyen administration and the new Dissident government in Santa Fe seemed to have encouraged the revival of working-class militancy. At the very least, the heightened intensity of class conflict must have made the midlevel, Dissident party leaders who voted in internal elections uncomfortable with Caballero's pro-labor politics.

To Dissident committee leaders concerned about violence and labor unrest, Elizalde offered an attractive alternative to Caballero. First of all, Elizalde and his close ally, Noriega, were more clearly identified with Rosario's elite mercantile community than Caballero and his followers. Both Elizalde, a wealthy merchant, and Noriega, a large landowner, were longtime members of the Bolsa de Comercio and the Jockey Club. But more important, neither politician engaged in the kind of pro-labor politics that had become Caballero's trademark. Noriega earned the thanks of workers and the ire of the British railroad company for his neutrality as chief of

police during the 1917 strikes, yet he never lost the support of *La Capital* and the Bolsa de Comercio, the representatives of Rosario's elite business interests. In these circles, he was perceived as an official who would never sacrifice social order for his own political interests.⁵² Meanwhile, Elizalde managed to present himself as a "man of the people" without ever employing threatening rhetoric about the rights of workers. Although he was of Basque descent, Elizalde frequently adopted a criollo pose, speaking in colloquialisms and offering his interviewers mate (the popular tea) at every opportunity. Still, his political rhetoric sounded far more like that of the PDP or the Nationalist Radicals than Caballerismo. Although he enthusiastically joined the Progressive Democrats in condemning the government's repression of the striking police workers, his speeches generally focused on such uncontroversial topics as the need for Radicals to adopt "a well-defined platform" based on "precise programs [and] ideas of government." He attacked the Lehmann administration in much the same terms as the rest of the opposition, insisting that "the path of democracy be free of personalisms."⁵³ By combining the trappings of popular criollismo with nonthreatening appeals for a politics of principle, Elizalde must have seemed the perfect choice for Dissident leaders who wished to maintain the base of support that Caballero had built, while at the same time nullifying the threat of class warfare posed by Caballerismo.

As the Elizaldistas' defection demonstrated, the resurgence of labor unrest after 1917 transformed the political landscape in Rosario and in Santa Fe province as a whole, by convincing most politicians to distance themselves from Caballero. By heightening the threat posed by Caballero's pro-labor politics, the rise of violent class conflict undermined the alliances that had formed the basis of the Dissident party. When the party was formed in 1915, it represented a coalition of various groups linked only by their shared opposition to the Menchaca administration. Dissident factions from the northern part of the province hardly agreed with Caballero's pro-labor politics, but they were willing to join him because they recognized such an alliance as their only chance of winning elections in Rosario. And this strategy had proven successful in the elections of 1916 and 1918. However, now that the resurgence of labor unrest had dramatized the dangerous potential of Caballerista politics, northern Dissidents were increasingly uncomfortable with Caballero's high profile in the party.⁵⁴ When Dissident leaders from throughout Santa Fe met to select candidates for the upcoming election, the so-called Nordistas, led by the wealthy landowner, Ricardo Aldao, issued an ultimatum: Should the Dissident convention proclaim the Caballeristas' choice for gubernatorial candidate, the northerners would leave the party and join the Nationalist Radicals. Faced with the imminent division of his

party into three factions—the Nordistas, Caballeristas, and Elizaldistas—Governor Lehmann now had no clear base of support. Having lost control of the situation, Lehmann resigned on 1 December 1919. In the absence of a vice governor (the position had remained empty after Elizalde's resignation), the president of the provincial senate, a Nationalist Radical named Juan Cepeda, took over as interim governor.⁵⁵ By 1920, the Dissident party had disintegrated; four different Radical factions now competed in Santa Fe province.

Despite his political marginalization, Caballero remained a potent threat. Although Elizalde's revolt stripped him of control over the departmental committee, and Lehmann's resignation left him without the backing of the provincial government, Caballero retained a large degree of popularity among voters as well as the loyalty of a substantial minority among the leaders of the old Dissident committees. During the 1920 campaign, Progressive Democrats, Nationalist Radicals, and Elizaldistas all concentrated their rhetorical attacks on Caballerista class politics. With the specter of class-based violence foremost in their minds, politicians resuscitated an old mode of attack, associating Caballerismo with a return to the uncivilized world of the gaucho. The newspaper *El Diario* condemned the Caballeristas' "gaucho politics," accusing them, among other things, of giving jobs to poor people in exchange for votes: "Santa Fe returns under those supposed Radicals to the primitive period of gaucho barbarism. Added to that barbarism today are the most regressive methods, which do not even exclude armed attacks on opposition meetings."⁵⁶ Likewise, *La Capital* condemned Caballero's efforts to instigate "criminal hatreds" and "gauchesque intolerances" between different sectors of the population.⁵⁷ All of this rhetoric warned voters that a Caballerista victory would engender a return to a violent and uncivilized past. For his part, Caballero seems to have directed most of his campaign attacks against Fermín Lejarza, the PDP's gubernatorial candidate. The Caballeristas repeatedly accused Lejarza of being an aristocrat whose class interests made him hostile to the working class.⁵⁸

The collapse of the Dissident party had a decisive impact on the provincial election of 1920, enabling the PDP to carry Rosario for the first time (see table 4). This local victory nearly enabled the Progressive Democrats to win control of the Santa Fe government, but the Nationalist Radicals won enough of the province's northern departments to narrowly edge the PDP in the electoral vote tally. In a reversal of fortunes for Menchaca's branch of the Radical party, Enrique Mosca took over as governor. Still, the Caballeristas did manage a strong second-place finish in Rosario, where they received more votes than the Nationalists and Elizaldistas combined. Caballero's long-standing popularity among workers, as well as his strategy of vilifying his opponents as enemies of the working class, helped his

faction garner 32 percent of the vote, compared to the PDP's 38 percent. This result was actually quite impressive in light of the popularity and political influence of former Dissidents such as Elizalde and Noriega. Still, even though the Elizaldistas only received 12 percent of the vote in 1920, this moderate showing was enough to prevent Caballero from achieving a majority in Rosario for the first time since the introduction of competitive elections in 1912. The PDP only surpassed its 1918 total by two percentage points. Had Elizalde not defected and had his supporters remained loyal to the Dissidents, Caballero's party would have come within one percentage point of duplicating its 1918 performance and would have easily defeated the Progressive Democrats.

Table 4. Provincial Election Results
in the Department of Rosario, 1918 and 1920

	1918	1920
PDP	8,180 (36%)	10,590 (38%)
Dissidents (Caballeristas)	10,244 (45%)	8,902 (32%)
Elizaldistas		3,397 (12%)
Nationalist Radicals	3,031 (13%)	2,707 (10%)
Socialists	939 (4%)	840 (3%)
Blank	n.a.	1,194 (4%)
Totals	22,997	27,630

Sources: *La Capital*, 23 March 1918, 5; 7 February 1920, 5.

Note: The 1918 totals and percentages do not add up because blank and "various" votes are unavailable. The percentages for 1920 do not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Elizalde's less threatening political message probably helped him win over some elite and middle-class voters, just as it had helped him win the internal Dissident party elections in 1918. But of the nearly 3,400 votes Elizalde received in the 1920 election, some significant proportion must have come from workers.¹⁹ Caballero's ability to speak to Rosario's working-class voters had probably diminished, a trend that would continue over the next few years. In an atmosphere increasingly characterized by class conflict, even the Caballeristas had modified their pro-labor rhetoric. During the police strike of December 1918, Caballero had defended the government's violent repression of the strikers rather than risk alienating Governor Lehmann. Likewise, in

a 1919 speech, Caballero emphasized the need to struggle against “anarchy and the wave of destruction that threatens to tear down the foundations on which contemporary societies rest.”⁶⁰ Some workers might have perceived this use of mainstream anti-anarchist rhetoric as a sign that Caballero would no longer champion the cause of the working class. And this impression may have been strengthened in January 1919 when Tobías Arribillaga, the new Caballerista mayor of Rosario, rejected the demands of striking municipal workers and accused the union of seeking to establish “a center of perpetual rebellion.”⁶¹ This hardening of the Caballeristas’ attitude toward the organized labor movement may have turned off just enough working-class voters to doom the faction’s efforts in the 1920 campaign.

Whether Caballero’s defeat resulted from the alienation of working-class voters or simply from the defection of Dissident leaders who were able to take their supporters with them, the outcome of the election seemed particularly significant. Caballero’s longtime opponents reacted to their enemy’s defeat with triumphant glee. One local newspaper celebrated the event by running two satirical cartoons on its front page. In the first, an urbane and elegantly dressed Mosca took a sword to Caballero, who was depicted in the rustic attire of a gaucho. In the second cartoon, the gauchesque Caballero cried over his party’s grave. These drawings depicted the provincial election of 1920 as a turning point for Argentine political culture. For the newspaper’s artists and editors, Mosca’s victory represented the triumph of modern, civilized, elite-led politics over old-fashioned, vulgar, and dangerous demagoguery. Caballero, the accompanying editorial declared, was a “bad man who is leaving once and for all.”⁶² Although this prediction was a bit premature—after all, as a national senator, Caballero was by no means stripped of all his political influence—the election did inaugurate a new period in Rosario politics. Over the next few years, most Rosarino politicians continued to distance themselves from Caballero, leaving him unable to make the kind of alliances he needed to regain control of local politics.

Losing Faith in Democracy: “Patriotic” and Corporatist Responses to the Class Problem

Caballero’s defeat in the provincial election of 1920 was only one byproduct of the wave of labor unrest that began in 1917. Perhaps even more significant was a growing dissatisfaction with democracy itself. On New Year’s Day, 1920, *La Capital* declared that the ongoing warfare between capital and labor was the single most important inheritance of the previous year. And, in hyperbolic form, the paper blamed this conflict on politics: “Politicians are, in the end, responsible for all the misfortunes that afflict humanity. . . . [I]f conflicts end then politics ends, and no one wants to harm his

own electoral interests, even if that would bring tranquility and prosperity to the republic.”⁶³ Like *La Capital*, many politicians now believed that electoral democracy actually created social division and conflict. Since the reforms of 1912, politicians had been pulled in two directions: They sought to defeat the opposition by attracting working-class voters to their own party, even as they aimed to transform workers into virtuous citizens whose first loyalty was to the common interest of the nation. The presence of politicians such as Caballero made these two projects seem incompatible: How could one compete with Caballero’s pro-labor nationalism without appealing to workers’ unique interests as a social class? To many Rosarino politicians, the strikes of 1917-1922 indicated that the Caballeristas had effectively undermined the nation-building potential of democracy by contributing to a hardening of working-class identity. For these politicians, democracy appeared no longer as a means of overcoming class conflict, but rather as an impediment to this project. Disillusioned with democracy, voices from both inside and outside of the political sphere began to advocate various nonpolitical means of assuaging class conflict. These new movements accepted the resilience of class identity and turned away from the notion of incorporating workers into the nation by transforming them into virtuous citizens.

A key moment in the declining legitimacy of democracy came during the first few weeks of 1919, after an unprecedented outburst of xenophobic anti-labor violence in Buenos Aires. The so-called *Semana Trágica*, or Tragic Week, began as a general strike called to protest the violent repression of a metallurgical strike in the Argentine capital. With workers engaged in sporadic riots, army troops entered Buenos Aires and quickly took control of the situation. But even though the general strike collapsed after only a few days, many people interpreted the labor action as a sign of an impending revolution. In response, mobs of disgruntled civilians and police attacked working-class neighborhoods, union offices, and labor presses, injuring and killing many. Using guns and ammunition provided by the army, this spontaneous paramilitary movement also singled out Jewish immigrants, long suspected of anarchist tendencies, for violent attack. The military, especially the navy, quickly moved to organize the vigilantes into an efficient civil guard charged with “maintaining order.” A few days after the violence of the Tragic Week had subsided, this nascent civil guard became the Argentine Patriotic League. Enlisting the support of many of the most prestigious citizens of Buenos Aires, the League was an explicitly nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting social order and respect for the law, as well as to stimulating patriotism. Over the next several years, the League concentrated on spreading its nationalist, antileftist publicity, while organizing brigades of scab laborers in order to break strikes.⁶⁴

Although Rosario did not experience as dramatic an outburst of violence as Buenos Aires, the city did feel certain repercussions from the Tragic Week of January 1919. Since the previous October, Rosario had been the site of a series of intense labor conflicts, culminating in the police strike in December. This wave of unrest continued after the New Year. Municipal workers walked off the job on 7 January, launching a strike that turned violent as soon as Mayor Arribillaga began hiring scab labor. Angry strikers turned over garbage carts, vandalized tramway cars, broke streetlights, and skirmished with replacement workers and the police. Within a few days, Rosario's port workers and many of its railroad workers were also on strike, having joined movements led by their national unions. In the midst of this crisis, a group of young people quickly organized a patriotic demonstration "of support for the established authorities and for the maintenance of order." In apparent imitation of the patriotic groups being formed in Buenos Aires, a large crowd marched through the streets of downtown Rosario, waving Argentine flags and singing the national anthem. After the rally, a group of "boys" continued to imitate the Buenos Aires civil guards by stoning several Jewish-owned businesses in Rosario's Central Market.⁶⁵ The following evening, many of the city's most well-known citizens met to form the so-called "Committee for National Defense," an organization that would support the preservation of order and lobby for laws that would favor the working class. The Committee, which was composed in large part of politicians from all the mainstream parties, declared that it did not harbor "hostile intentions against any foreign nationality, but rather against the elements that disturb the social order."⁶⁶

The Committee for National Defense disbanded as soon as the violence died down, claiming that the restoration of order obviated the need for such an organization. Nevertheless, the impulse to defend order and spread patriotism remained alive. In response to the January strikes, *La Capital* reiterated its call for labor legislation, but the newspaper now argued that reformist laws alone could not solve the problem:

There are labor movements in all countries, and [these are] generally more intense than among us. Nevertheless, neither in England, country of trade unions, nor in North America or France, are there such intense explosions. . . . These are countries which . . . have acquired the spirit of social solidarity. They are not peoples of destructive ferment; they are cohesive peoples. This is what we are especially lacking. Education . . . should have solved this ethnic and moral problem, and it has not done so because the school has been, until now, infected with politics, the worst politics, that of elections and [patronage] jobs, not establishing among the diverse elements who come

to this country the sustaining principle of social solidarity. . . . As a result, in class struggles the elements who make up Argentine nationality are characterized by their violence, by their reciprocal hostility.⁶⁷

For *La Capital*, the violence of class conflict in Argentina revealed that a unified nation—a “cohesive people”—had not yet come into existence. The schools had failed in the task of uniting immigrants into a coherent, close-knit community, a failure the newspaper blamed on politics, which had split the nation apart instead of bringing it together. As this passage suggests, the emergence of elite patriotic groups in Rosario was less a xenophobic movement against foreign anarchists than a renewed attempt to replace divisive class loyalties with a unifying national identity. By 1919, many observers believed that the biggest obstacle to that nationalist project was democratic politics.

On 15 May 1919, a group of the most elite Rosarinos met at the Jockey Club to found the local branch of the Argentine Patriotic League. As was the case with the short-lived Committee for National Defense formed four months before, the League was composed of noted citizens from both inside and outside of politics. In addition to wealthy businessmen, local politicians from all the mainstream parties figured prominently on the eighty-member governing board elected at this first meeting. Included among the League’s directors were the prominent Progressive Democrats Lisandro de la Torre, Francisco Correa, and Enrique Thedy; the Nationalist Radicals Juan Luis Ferrarotti and Juan Cepeda; the well-known Caballeristas Julio Bello and Jorge Raúl Rodríguez; and both Francisco Elizalde and Néstor Noriega.⁶⁸ Moreover, the new organization insisted on its nonpartisan character. In its first public declaration, Rosario’s branch of the Patriotic League explicitly denied any political motives; instead, the organization aimed to enrich the nation, to help improve the lives of working people, and to “teach the people to love their traditions [and to love] the nation’s army and navy.”⁶⁹

The Patriotic League represented an effort by politicians and other elites to remove the “labor question” from the political sphere. At the moment of the League’s founding, the strike wave in Rosario showed no signs of ending. Restaurant and hotel workers had recently walked off the job, as had workers at the Banco Español, the prestigious retail establishment Gath y Chaves, and the FCCA railroad workshops. In the same issue that it reported on the Patriotic League’s founding, *La Capital* remarked that “the reigning agitation among almost all of the local labor unions continues to be intense.”⁷⁰ Moreover, during the month of May alone, the newspaper ran five editorials criticizing the government’s failure to resolve the ongoing crisis of class conflict.⁷¹ Given this perceived failure, the organizers of the Patriotic League believed that a successful effort to ameliorate this crisis would have to take place

outside of the realm of democratic party politics.

Following the lead of the Buenos Aires branch, Rosario's League organized a parade and rally to celebrate the 25 May holiday commemorating the revolution that led to Argentina's independence from Spain. At the demonstration, the keynote speech was given on behalf of the League by Emilio Cardarelli, a longtime Nationalist Radical and former city councilman. Cardarelli blamed the current crisis on anarchist labor organizers. Workers, he said, participated in violent strikes because anarchists "have told them that injustice governs, that the rich are all happy and that all wealth is robbery. Because they have told them that *desgobierno* [lack of government], demagoguery, lack of discipline, and communism are panaceas that cure all evils."⁷² Even though Cardarelli defended democracy against its anarchist critics, his reference to the problem of demagoguery suggested an implicit critique of party politics. Caballerismo had shown that politicians, like anarchists, might seek to profit from class divisions, that they might in fact encourage class conflict in order to win votes. Given this danger, the nationalist response to anarchism and labor violence must come from a nonpartisan movement organized outside of the political sphere.

The Rosarino elites who joined the Patriotic League were no longer interested in the project of turning workers into citizens. On the contrary, they accepted and even tried to reinforce working-class identity; what they wished to avoid was the politicization of that identity. In a piece narrating the history of Argentina's labor problems, the newspaper of the League's student association in Rosario clarified the organization's attitude toward the working class. The article began by describing a golden age in which workers used to come home to their families tired but happy: "Everything was peace and harmony in the worker's home." But this peaceful world was disturbed by labor activists who convinced workers to demand improvements: "[T]he exploiters of the proletariat spoke to [the worker] of rights, and in his ingenuity he let himself be fooled." Nevertheless, the article ended on an optimistic note; workers were finally beginning to turn their backs on the harmful ideology preached by agitators and to regain the "feeling of patriotism" they had lost.

Today we again see the worker forging his character on the anvil of work. Workers! . . . [F]ollow always the sure path of work and you will arrive at the beautiful horizon of progress, where you will feel the pride and satisfaction felt by all Argentines who have contributed effectively to the exaltation of their beloved fatherland.⁷³

For the Patriotic League, then, the truly patriotic worker embraced a nonpolitical

version of class identity. He contributed to the nation by concentrating on his work, accepting his status instead of organizing to improve it. Crucially, though, this discourse not only disparaged unionism; it also implied that workers had no legitimate interest in political participation. They were workers, not citizens.

Interestingly, the Rosario Patriotic League generally avoided statements attacking anarchists as foreigners. Cardarelli, like many Argentine intellectuals, did argue that anarchism was an imported ideology that had no place in Argentina, where democracy and economic opportunity were available to all. But he did not engage in any rhetoric that could be considered xenophobic.⁷⁴ Rosario's Patriotic League offered a form of nationalism that its members hoped would be as appealing to foreigners as it was to natives. Because so many of Rosario's most elite residents—and, by extension, so many of the League's board members—were of foreign descent, this aversion to xenophobia was logical. But perhaps more to the point, Caballero had long since given xenophobia an explicitly populist, anti-elite meaning in Rosario. Having diligently defended immigrants against Caballero's *criollista* attacks, Rosarino politicians could not now turn against them in order to combat the labor movement. Some Rosarinos did differentiate between good productive immigrants and the foreign mob likely to join anarchist unions, but the advent of the Patriotic League was not a sign of rising xenophobia so much as it reflected a growing sense that democracy could not forge a unified nation in the face of persistent class divisions. Private citizens needed to organize themselves outside of politics in order to spread patriotism and combat the anarchist labor movement. In the years after 1919, the League actively pursued these goals in Rosario by organizing public celebrations of national holidays, recruiting brigades of scab laborers, and promoting patriotic education in the schools.

The trend toward nonpolitical organization was visible in other initiatives as well. Less than a month after the formation of the Patriotic League, a group of Rosarino business owners founded the *Federación Gremial de Comercio e Industria* as a sort of union to defend their common interests. In its founding statement, the *Federación* called for solidarity among the owners of commercial and industrial establishments and declared its support for arbitration mechanisms to resolve labor disputes.⁷⁵ Two weeks later, a similar organization was created by the city's engineers, architects, and builders. The president of this new association argued that "men affected by the same economic and social problems must join together, establish bonds of solidarity and culture so that common efforts will be beneficial not only to the collectivity but to each of its members."⁷⁶ Both the *Federación Gremial* and the builders' association supported certain benefits for workers, but they emphasized that employers, like workers, needed unions to represent their interests in labor

conflicts. Like the Patriotic League, these new organizations reflected a growing desire to confront the problem of class conflict outside the political arena.⁷⁷ And just as the League encouraged a nonpolitical, working-class identity, the new corporate organizations embraced the logic of class conflict. Instead of hoping to make workers into citizens, the members of the new business groups sought to counteract working-class mobilization by organizing in defense of their own class interests. This hardening of class divisions represented another step away from the cohesive nation of citizens that was supposed to have emerged with the transition to democracy.⁷⁸

Even as Rosario's capitalists forged new corporate organizations, many observers blamed politics for making such steps necessary. Disruptive and unproductive political practices, they argued, had prevented the emergence of an efficient and well-organized economy. *La Capital* declared that violent strikes continued to disrupt the nation because the government lacked "a labor policy of study, conciliation, harmony and progress. We have wasted most of the time on questions of partisan politicking [*politiquería partidista*]." ⁷⁹ Another local newspaper argued that the end of World War I and the concomitant transformation of the international market made it necessary for Argentina to reorganize its economy in order to become more self-sufficient. Factions within the public and private sectors, the paper argued, must all work together to achieve this goal. "But we very much fear that this urgent cooperation between people and government will fail faced with the advance of the specter of electioneering politics [*el fantasma politiquero*], the virulent plague that is undermining our national organism."⁸⁰ These arguments revealed a widespread frustration with politics and betrayed a new attitude toward the role of the state. Afraid of democracy's potential to provoke disorder, many observers began to emphasize the need for the state to create a more efficiently organized society and economy.

These new attitudes—the skepticism toward democratic politics and the growing sense that the state needed to reorganize society—were apparent in contemporary discussion about public education. Public schools had long been imagined to play a crucial role in the interrelated processes of "Argentinizing" immigrants and producing virtuous citizens.⁸¹ In the immediate aftermath of the transition to democracy in 1912, reformers and public officials had emphasized the urgent need to implement a civic education program in which the newly enfranchised would be trained to perform their duties as citizens.⁸² To a large extent, the Argentine Patriotic League's attempts to promote national feeling in the schools represented a continuation of this line of thinking. But alongside this continuity, a new emphasis began to emerge in approaches to education reform. The continued prevalence of class conflict and the apparent success of demagogues who preyed on the ignorance and poverty of working-class

voters made Rosario's politicians less sanguine about the possibility of teaching the masses to be good citizens. Increasingly, educational reform came to focus not so much on producing capable citizens as on training productive workers. Whereas Governor Lehmann had described education as "the cornerstone of true democracy,"⁸³ his successor, Enrique Mosca, labeled it "the cornerstone on which the structure of the collective forces and national wealth is slowly being built."⁸⁴ While Mosca shared his predecessor's appreciation for the importance of education, the edifice he wished to construct upon it was economic, not political. .

This new orientation toward education was nowhere more evident than in Rosario's Popular University, a night school for workers founded in late 1918. Like the Patriotic League, the Popular University's governing board was composed of politicians from all the major parties and explicitly presented itself as nonpartisan. The organization's founder, Senator Agustín Araya, described the university as "a new system of practical and ethical professional instruction which has as its end the industrial intensification of the country by reducing the costs of production while increasing the productive capacity and improving the morality of the worker."⁸⁵ Unlike earlier schools for workers in Rosario, which complemented vocational courses with classes on history and political theory,⁸⁶ the Popular University was not intended to produce cultured citizens. Instead, the school aimed to create a skilled workforce capable of participating in industrial development; as a byproduct, it would keep workers off the picket line by allowing them to attain high-paying and satisfying employment. The Popular University's relatively narrow focus on vocational training revealed a growing pessimism about the possibility of transforming workers into citizens. Like the Patriotic League, the new school reflected a desire to confront the "labor question" outside of democratic politics. Like the new corporate organizations, it sought to resolve this problem by accepting class divisions and creating a more efficiently organized society.

The many institutions created in this period—the Patriotic League, corporate associations, the Popular University—signaled the emergence in the private sector of a new, nondemocratic orientation toward Argentina's social problems. Beginning in 1920, this new attitude became prevalent within the government as well. With the changeover from Lehmann's Dissident administration to a Nationalist Radical government in Santa Fe, provincial authorities began to promote various nondemocratic, quasi-corporatist strategies for confronting class conflict. Taking over as interim governor after Lehmann's resignation, Juan Cepeda declared that a fundamental change had occurred within the labor movement. Whereas earlier strikes had been orderly and calm protests aimed at achieving economic improvements, the unions were now

engaging in violent subversive uprisings led by professional agitators.⁸⁷ According to Cepeda, this change necessitated a new type of response from the government. He argued that while the authorities needed to use force to repress these movements when they became excessive, the government must also begin to pursue more actively "that precept of distributive justice which orders that each be given what is his, since justice is one of the immutable bases upon which all duly constituted political societies have been built."⁸⁸ Taking over the provincial government in 1920, Enrique Mosca likewise acknowledged the need to confront the economic inequality that lay at the root of Argentina's labor crisis. But rather than use electoral democracy as a means of overcoming class conflict, Cepeda, Mosca and their allies intended to address the problem of inequality on a prepolitical level; they believed that for democracy to function properly, society must first be reorganized in a more efficient manner. These politicians accepted the hardening of class divisions that was taking place in society. No longer believing that workers could be transformed into virtuous citizens, they wanted to increase the power of the state and to organize society along corporatist lines.

In his inaugural message of 1920, Mosca pledged "to attend and consult the interests of workers," and he called for the creation of a provincial labor department in order to help create harmony between capital and labor. But at the same time, he promised "to repress with a firm hand any disturbance of order [or] attack on property."⁸⁹ And to a certain extent, Mosca's policies did conform to these promises. On the one hand, the administration proved more than willing to use force against strikers. In a noteworthy incident in August 1920, Juan Cepeda, whom Mosca had appointed Rosario's chief of police, ordered his men to open fire on a group of port workers in the city's Plaza San Martín. The unarmed workers, who had gathered in the plaza in order to demand the release of some imprisoned strikers, suffered at least two fatalities and many more injuries. Likewise, Mosca's response to rural strikes was particularly forceful.⁹⁰ However, the administration did manage to push through the legislature its project creating a labor department as well as another project creating job placement agencies in Santa Fe and Rosario. Late in his term Mosca also proposed a minimum wage law, a law regulating domestic work, and other pro-labor initiatives.⁹¹ Likewise, the government organized a labor congress, in which representatives of labor, business, and government met to discuss possible solutions to the crisis. Although the congress was canceled in 1920 due to the intensity of the ongoing strikes, it did eventually take place in Rosario in 1923.

As these actions demonstrate, the Mosca administration was more aggressive than its predecessors in trying to expand the power of the state to ameliorate labor conflict. This aggressiveness resulted, in part, from an appreciation of the inequality

fostered by capitalism. Chief of Police Cepeda argued that it was this inequality that allowed anarchist demagogues to win over workers:

It is in the servile relationship to the boss, in the forced submission of the worker, which is created and maintained by the current salary regime, where one must look for the latent focus of the feeling of rebellion that is stimulated by the propaganda of professional agitators who come from all parts.⁹²

Here Cepeda, whose actions in the Plaza San Martín and elsewhere gave him a reputation as a vicious strikebreaker, voiced the widespread notion that foreign anarchists tricked Argentine workers into joining violent strike movements. But he also acknowledged that the injustice of the wage system gave workers a legitimate reason for discontent. Agustín Araya, the founder of Rosario's Popular University and now a key member of Mosca's cabinet, agreed. He insisted that

the [labor] contract system does not operate between equals. . . . Out of the intimate conviction of that unequal situation, the tendency toward violent methods is born in the worker. . . . Faced with social conflicts, which are not the private affair of those capitalists and workers most directly involved, and which are creating a chasm between capital and labor, placing them in opposite camps based on an artificial antagonism maintained by doctrinaire dogmatism, it is up to the State, the only impartial and disinterested authority, to intervene, seeking to conciliate them, avoiding sterile agitations and dangerous explosions.⁹³

Like Cepeda, Araya recognized that capitalism unfairly placed workers in a subordinate position, making them vulnerable to agitators who encouraged them to rebel. Given that unfortunate fact, Araya called for the state to play a more active role in the mediation of class conflict.

For Governor Mosca and his allies, the recognition that labor unrest was caused by the injustices of capitalism had serious political consequences. In a 1923 speech, Mosca declared that "our political formulas and our administrative organization do not respond to current problems." He argued that back in the days of Alberdi and the Argentine Constitution, a "laissez faire" approach on the part of the state made sense. The wealth of the nation in those times, as well as the people's religiosity, enabled society to take care of itself. However, the old political arrangements no longer made sense given today's social problems. Argentina, he argued, had allowed the economy to grow at a terrific pace without taking the trouble to organize it. As a result,

land had been concentrated in the hands of a few men, and the nation's population had become polarized between the "disinherited" masses and a tiny "aristocratic caste," a situation that amounted to "a threat to the future of our democracy." The solution, according to Mosca, was that the state must carry out a "legal revolution," reforming the tax system, passing laws to improve the situation of workers, and providing workers with more healthy and moral leisure activities in order to lure them away from gambling and from joining anarchist unions. Among the many reforms the governor proposed, he emphasized the need to grant legal recognition to unions with "legitimate representation" in order to "be able to call on them to collaborate with the State and with all the organic forces of the province."⁹⁴ Here, Mosca hinted that he intended to extend state control over the unions and to foster a more corporatist political system, in which each distinct sector of the economy would find representation within the state.

Mosca's efforts to expand the role of the state in labor conflicts culminated in the labor congress held in Rosario in 1923. In his speech inaugurating the conference, Agustín Araya pointed out that the democratic system envisioned by Argentina's founding fathers was built upon the guarantee of equal opportunity for all citizens. Even if never perfectly achieved, the illusion of equality and liberty, he argued, had sustained enormous progress. But in contemporary Argentina, that illusion was no longer convincing: "[W]hile the social patrimony has grown in prodigious form, the distribution of the goods accumulated by common effort has not occurred in relation to the 'proportion of activity' manifested by each man who contributed to their creation."⁹⁵ As a result of this obvious injustice, many workers had turned their backs on democracy and embraced anarchism. In the labor congress, then, the Mosca administration sought to determine what measures the government should take so as to reestablish the sort of social harmony necessary for democracy to work. Whereas Rosario's politicians used to see democratic politics as the means by which class divisions could be overcome, this administration argued that society had to be reorganized before democracy could function.

By bringing together delegations from organizations representing both business and labor, the labor congress put Mosca's vision of a quasi-corporatist state into practice. In his decree convoking the congress, the governor specified that representatives of all of the province's industries, labor organizations, and agricultural associations were to meet in order to determine the best means of achieving the following goals: the moral and material improvement of workers, insurance for workers, the resolution of agrarian conflicts, a more efficient means of arbitrating conflicts between labor and capital, and the reduction of the cost of living. However, the list of delegations

that actually participated in the congress reveals that only eight of Rosario's unions sent delegates to the congress.⁹⁶ While the leaders of the local Catholic Workers' Circle did participate, neither the anarchist labor federation, nor any of the city's most powerful unions—railroad, port, and municipal workers—were represented.⁹⁷ Mosca's intention was to marginalize and repress Rosario's anarchist unions, while incorporating the city's most conservative labor organizations into the state, involving them in policy decisions in order to secure their support. This novel strategy aimed at incorporating workers into public life not as individual citizens who participated in democratic politics, but as members of conservative working-class organizations that would negotiate with the representatives of other classes in state-sponsored congresses.

The Mosca administration's incorporative strategy, like the new private sector institutions, revealed the rise of an antidemocratic orientation within Rosario's political establishment. For these politicians, democratic politics had devolved too easily into demagoguery, reinforcing class divisions and sowing the seeds of violence and social disorder. Consequently, they began to relinquish their dreams of a virtuous citizenry capable of ignoring its selfish interests and pursuing the common good. Politicians were no longer confident that workers would evolve into good citizens through education and experience, nor that democracy alone could forge a cohesive nation. Instead, they began to look for more corporatist means of bringing workers into the state. Rather than transform workers into citizens, they now hoped only to make them more skilled, moral, and conservative workers. This new attitude was reinforced by a sense of economic crisis and by international events. While the disruptions caused by World War I shook the confidence of Argentine elites and led many to see the need for a state-led process of industrialization, the Bolshevik Revolution dramatized the potential consequences of popular mobilization. But more than any other factor, it was the growing militancy of Rosario's unions that caused politicians to rethink their commitment to democracy. If democracy created disorder, if it reinforced a dangerous working-class consciousness, then perhaps Argentine society needed to be reorganized before workers could be trusted to participate as citizens.

Resurgent Anarchism: The Retreat of the Politicians

While the revitalization of Rosario's labor movement triggered a transformation of the political landscape, that transformation in turn reinforced developments within the unions, enabling anarchist organizers to expand their influence among workers. Anarchists had long seen their fortunes affected by developments in the political sphere; in the aftermath of the 1912 electoral reform, for example, the rise of

Caballerismo cut significantly into their base of support. Years later, one group of Rosario anarchists recalled the early period of electoral democracy:

[I]t was in this epoch when rabble-rousing [*revoltoso y populachero*] Radicalism inserted itself into the revolutionary movement that was propagating anarchism. Its spiritual guides, Dr. Caballero and others, seeing in the novel labor movement a formidable lever for realizing their hopes of predominance and achieving their longed-for goal, the conquest of power, introduced themselves among the workers, creating agents in the unions, who would later become the factors of corruption that would contribute to deforming and degenerating that movement.⁹⁸

Whether or not Caballero was ever actually able to place his own agents inside Rosario's unions, between 1912 and 1918 he and his followers certainly did exercise significant influence over the city's working-class voters. And this influence may well have weakened the anarchists. Similarly, Caballero's decline, which began in 1918 and continued long after his defeat in the election of 1920, would facilitate an anarchist resurgence.

Following the 1920 election, Caballero attempted to recover his political influence by forging new alliances. In desperate need of political allies after Elizalde's defection and the breakdown of the Dissident party, he continued his efforts to strike a deal with Mosca and the Nationalist Radicals. After the provincial election of 1920, the two leaders did manage to come to a temporary agreement, according to which both backed a mixed slate of Caballerista and Nationalist candidates in the election for national deputies held on 7 March 1920.⁹⁹ Although it produced an electoral victory, the alliance did not last. The ongoing strike wave increased the unpopularity and political risks of an alliance with Caballero, and many Nationalist Radicals attacked Mosca for making the deal. Vice Governor elect Juan Luis Ferrarotti, for one, resigned in outrage over Mosca's decision to join the enemy. Faced with mounting opposition from within his own political base, the governor quickly turned against Caballero. By September, the pact had disintegrated; Caballero abstained from the election for delegates to a convention charged with reforming the provincial constitution. Faced with the insurmountable opposition of the wide majority of Rosario politicians, he called on his followers to cast blank ballots.¹⁰⁰

The persistence of violent labor unrest narrowed the political space open to Caballero. On the one hand, he needed to reassure elites that he did not encourage the spread of anarchism and revolutionary social disorder. But at the same time, as striking

workers began to face a more repressive response from government, Caballero also had to convince working-class voters that he remained committed to pro-labor policies. In the speech in which he declared his abstention from the election for constitutional convention delegates, he tried to accomplish both of these ends. Caballero called on politicians to resolve their differences in order to fight the anarchist plague: “[T]he powerful forces that are working to disorganize the world pursue their work slowly but steadily, devastating with their evil influence the soul of the popular classes, who are led astray in a sort of religion, the saddest and most sensual that has ever been known.”¹⁰¹ But despite this anti-anarchist rhetoric, Caballero also emphasized his support for workers. He declared that the ultimate stage of democratic evolution was “the economic emancipation of the people,” and he condemned the Mosca administration for the police attack on protesting port workers in Rosario’s Plaza San Martín, which had occurred just one month earlier. How, he asked, could the Caballeristas ever come to terms with the Radical faction in power, “when workers are shot in the back in the second city of the Republic, bringing bloody memories to life in the soul of this virile people?”¹⁰² By attacking both anarchism and state repression, Caballero sought to carve out a moderate, pro-labor position.

Despite his efforts to please both nervous elites and militant workers, Caballero only managed to alienate both. Still fearful of Caballerista class politics, mainstream politicians continued to distance themselves from him.¹⁰³ In January 1922, Caballero remained unable to find political allies, and he declared his intention to abstain from the provincial election of that year, urging his supporters once again to cast blank votes. In a strident manifesto, the Caballeristas attacked Santa Fe’s Radicals for turning their backs on the needs of workers; in order to survive, they argued, Radicalism needed “a doctrinal program directed toward really assuring the liberty of the working mass.”¹⁰⁴ Four years of nearly constant labor unrest had made this type of explicitly pro-labor rhetoric unpalatable to almost all of Rosario’s politicians. These politicians were willing to support Agustín Araya’s efforts to train more skilled workers at the Popular University, and many of them were enthusiastic about Governor Mosca’s attempts to create state-controlled mechanisms for the arbitration of labor conflicts. What they wished to avoid at all costs was a political movement that appealed to working-class voters by promising to liberate them from economic oppression. Faced with the threat of a mobilized working class, Rosarino politicians united around their common hegemonic interest. Through their efforts to isolate Caballero—pushing him to abstain in the elections of October 1920 and February 1922—they went a long way toward protecting that hegemony by preserving the barrier between working-class interests and party politics.

The marginalization of Caballero created an opening for other would-be representatives

of the working class, but most politicians were unwilling to take advantage. Increasingly disillusioned with democracy, Rosarino politicians did not refocus their energies on attracting working-class voters. While the Progressive Democrats continued to preach a "politics of principles," the Nationalist Radicals, led by Mosca and Araya, developed their quasi-corporatist schemes to resolve labor conflict outside of the democratic process. As politicians retreated from the struggle to win over workers and to transform them into citizens, a reinvigorated anarchist movement stepped, at least temporarily, into the vacuum they left behind. Seeking to win over those workers who had previously supported Caballero, the anarchist press singled him out for attack. Anarchists seized on the new, more moderate tone of Caballero's rhetoric as evidence of his true bourgeois loyalties. After Caballero attacked the Russian Revolution in the senate, Rosario's anarchist newspaper, *El Comunista*, chided the Radical leader for his "ideological contradictions":

Forgetting the times when, with his overwhelming oratory, he made . . . his whole cohort of former admirers drool, speaking to them of programs of liberation, attacking [*dando mueras al*] the bourgeois concept of fatherland, and singing against this social regime; forgetting all this, he is now horrified because in Russia, he who does not work, does not eat.¹⁰⁵

Even as they positioned themselves as the sole, effective representatives of the working class, anarchists, like elite politicians, insisted on differentiating their rhetorical style from that of Caballerismo. In their own conferences and rallies, anarchists insisted that speakers address workers with straightforward, concrete language: "Workers need concepts and not figures; good reasons and not pretty words; clear, concise, decisive explanations and not phrases that are more or less literary, but orphaned of good sense."¹⁰⁶ Echoing the old elite call for a politics of principle, anarchists contrasted their own honest, intellectual language to the emotional appeals and empty words of demagogues like Caballero.

Within at least certain sectors of the workforce, the influence of anarchism and other radical ideologies grew substantially during these years. To cite one case, anarchists seemed to have usurped the leadership of the municipal workers' union from the Caballeristas. Since 1913, when Mayor Daniel Infante encouraged municipal workers to strike and to direct their protests against the members of the Liga del Sur on the city council, workers in this sector had often cooperated with Caballero's faction. In October 1918, during a PDP-led investigation into corruption in the city's sanitation department, armed municipal workers loyal to Caballero raided the department's

offices, apparently with the intention of destroying evidence of wrongdoing.¹⁰⁷ But in subsequent years this close relationship began to unravel. In response to the public outcry over repeated municipal strikes, Caballerista Mayor Tobías Arribillaga replaced striking municipal workers with scab labor in January 1919.¹⁰⁸

Within a few years, the severed ties between Caballero and the municipal workers' union opened the door to a takeover by anarcho-communist activists. In February 1921, Rosario's anarchist labor federation called a general strike in solidarity with the striking municipal workers, as well as the tramway workers, bakery workers, and several other unions. The general strike met with considerable success, and the anarchist newspaper declared triumphantly that times had changed: "In this strike, there is no politics, because workers have an oversupply of what politicians have only heard of: decency and dignity."¹⁰⁹ The predominance of anarchist ideology was nowhere more evident than in the municipal workers' union, whose members at one point took over the municipal government building and, imitating the Bolsheviks, proclaimed a "soviet." Joined by a group of radical students, the workers pulled down the Argentine flag from the building's roof, replacing it with the red flag of communism. They then issued a decree dissolving both the executive and the city council. Although this largely symbolic takeover of the city government was put down by army troops after less than two hours, the municipal workers eventually did achieve most of their demands, including half-pay for the days they had been on strike.¹¹⁰

Between the Caballeristas' raid on the sanitation department in 1918 and the municipal workers' soviet of 1921, a significant change had occurred in Rosario's labor movement: Caballerista influence had declined precipitously, while anarchism and other radical ideologies had become predominant. During this extended period of violent labor unrest, anarchists, communists, and socialists enjoyed an increased presence in many sectors of the labor force. Beginning his career as a skilled worker in the printing business, the young Francisco Monaco, later a prominent member of the Communist Party, came immediately into contact with a multitude of radical labor organizers of every ideological stripe.¹¹¹ In unprecedented numbers, Rosario's workers followed these union leaders on to the picket line. In its report for 1921, when labor unrest had already begun to decline following a high point in 1919 and 1920, the Rosario police listed sixteen major strikes by distinct unions in the city. Moreover, these strikes were accompanied by a significant amount of violence and even terrorism: At least six bombs exploded in Rosario in 1921 alone, including one in the home of Alfredo Rouillón, the president of Rosario's branch of the Argentine Patriotic League.¹¹²

However, even though radical activists controlled Rosario's unions, the rank and file

had not necessarily experienced an ideological conversion. As before, workers seemed to have joined unions led by anarchists not out of a commitment to anarchism, but because of their faith in the union leaders' capacity to deliver tangible benefits. Rosario's commercial employees' union, for example, was led by radical activists in this period, but its principal goals were enforcement of the Sunday rest law and enactment of a half-day on Saturday.¹³ According to the 1921 police report, each of that year's strikes was aimed at improvements in work conditions, reductions in hours, or pay raises. Moreover, even as they celebrated their triumphs, anarchists themselves criticized workers for their imperfect class consciousness. After the successful general strike of February 1921, the anarchist newspaper *El Comunista* decried the lack of revolutionary fervor evidenced during the conflict. The newspaper complained that rather than filling the streets with noisy protests, shutting down businesses, and disrupting the social order, striking workers were content either to stay at home or to indulge in the "unhealthy entertainments" of movies about cops and robbers.¹⁴

Workers had not converted to the anarcho-communist faith so much as they had simply embraced unions in the absence of any serious political or ideological alternatives. The growing power of extremist labor leaders and the decline of Caballerismo were mutually reinforcing trends; with Caballero no longer able to pose convincingly as the political defender of the working class, the antipolitical, bread-and-butter unionism offered by anarchists was much more attractive. Likewise, the Mosca administration's turn toward corporatist, nondemocratic strategies, itself a response to rising labor unrest, also reinforced the growing strength of unions. By stressing the need for responsible, officially recognized labor unions, Mosca privileged working-class identity over any class-neutral citizenship identity. This change in official discourse reinforced—or at least acknowledged—the salience of working-class identity. The resurgence of anarchism in the period after 1917 did not transform this identity in a profound and enduring way. Rosario workers did not, in other words, permanently abandon Caballero's criollista nationalism for anarchism's antipolitical, internationalist militancy. Rather, the absence of a credible political alternative enabled anarchist union leaders to benefit from workers' deepening sense of solidarity with members of their social class. Just as Caballero's appeals had so successfully articulated working-class identity with nationalist nostalgia in the earlier period, anarchists were now able to link this class identity to bread-and-butter unionism and a repudiation of the elite-dominated electoral arena. In their appeals to workers, anarchists were not above borrowing Caballerista language on occasion; in one instance, *El Comunista* attacked Manuel Carlés, the president of the Argentine Patriotic League, by describing him as the descendant of the Unitarian elites who oppressed the gauchos long ago.

The newspaper called on Rosario's anarchists to fight these new oppressors with the same courage and manliness of the old *paisanos*.¹¹⁵ The editors' willingness to use this *criollista* rhetoric suggests that they knew that working-class identity had not been radically transformed.

From about the middle of 1921, the wave of militant labor unrest began to subside in Rosario, as it did in the rest of the country. Just four months after the successful movement of February 1921, Rosario's anarchist union federation called for another work stoppage, this one in solidarity with a general strike movement in Buenos Aires as well as with a teachers' strike in Santa Fe province. But this time, Rosario's workers did not respond.¹¹⁶ By the end of the year, a local anarchist paper lamented what it saw as "the state of apathy and listlessness of the Rosarino proletariat, which gives the sad impression of having turned into a class that is subjected to slavery and does not aspire to break its chains."¹¹⁷ According to the police department's annual reports, the number of major strikes in Rosario declined steadily from fifteen in 1922 to eight in 1923 and finally to six in 1924. Moreover, with each passing year the police commented on the declining intensity of these conflicts.¹¹⁸

In part, the growing passivity of Rosario's unions reflected economic conditions; a deepening depression stripped labor of its bargaining power throughout Argentina. At the same time, increased levels of repression by the government as well as the successful strikebreaking techniques of the Patriotic League also took their toll. The marginalization of Caballero and the rise of officials such as Juan Cepeda, who enthusiastically applied force whenever they felt it necessary, gave workers less reason to expect strikes to succeed. Meanwhile, the Patriotic League, in conjunction with such pro-business groups as the Labor Association (*Asociación del Trabajo*), incorporated the rising numbers of unemployed workers into brigades of scab laborers and placed them at the disposal of Rosario's employers. When Governor Mosca appointed Alfredo Rouillón mayor, the public and private sector assaults on the labor movement were combined. According to the anarchist press, Mayor Rouillón, president of Rosario's Patriotic League, used both his political party committees and the League itself to recruit scab labor in order to break yet another strike by municipal workers. At the same time, Rouillón did not hesitate to use the power of the state against the strikers by jailing the union's leaders and closing its offices.¹¹⁹ In addition to this crackdown on strikes, Rosario's labor unions also began to suffer from internal divisions. Although anarchists lost their control over unions in Buenos Aires as early as 1915, when a syndicalist faction gained ascendancy, they remained dominant much longer in Rosario. However, as the labor movement began to lose momentum in 1921, the syndicalist union federation (the *Unión Sindical Argentina*, or USA) finally

established a significant presence in the city. For the next few years, labor leaders spent excessive amounts of time and energy fighting each other, inadvertently weakening the unions and hastening the decline of the movement.¹²⁰

Although the revitalization of the labor movement and the resurgence of anarchism lasted only a few years, politics in Rosario underwent a fundamental reorientation during this period. The intense labor mobilization of the period between 1917 and 1923 led politicians to break their ties to Caballero, leaving him unable to compete seriously in Rosario's elections. On a more profound level, many politicians came to see democratic politics itself as a destabilizing force, capable of provoking violence and undermining the social order. The antidemocratic, quasi-corporatist solutions that began to emerge, both within government and in the private sector, represented a step away from the notion that workers could be transformed into virtuous citizens. Even as they enthusiastically embraced the Argentine Patriotic League's efforts to spread patriotism, many Rosarinos now rejected the idea that an Argentine citizenship identity could overcome class divisions. They lost faith in democracy precisely because they could no longer imagine loosening the grip of working-class identity on the Argentine masses. Workers, it seemed, were members of their class before they were citizens of their country. With the dwindling of labor conflict, some of these fears would be assuaged, but the transformations in Rosario's political atmosphere were not undone. As late as 1924, Caballerista labor politics remained untenable in Rosario; in the election of that year, Caballero was forced to support Ricardo Aldao and Juan Cepeda, the conservative Nationalist Radical candidates for governor and vice governor.¹²¹ Only four years after he had bitterly attacked Cepeda for ordering the police to fire on workers in the Plaza San Martín, Caballero now had little alternative but to back his former enemy.

CHAPTER SIX

The Persistence of Class in the Last Days of Democracy, 1923–1930

Following the explosive class conflict of the 1917–1922 period, Argentina's labor movement entered a prolonged period of stagnation. In Rosario, as elsewhere in the country, union membership lagged, and strikes were rare. At the same time, the widespread distrust of democracy, which emerged in the aftermath of the postwar strike wave, deepened during the 1920s. Following Governor Mosca's lead, politicians in Rosario and throughout Santa Fe province abandoned the project of turning workers into citizens. Convinced of the inevitability of class divisions, they now sought to defuse the threat of class conflict through nonpolitical channels. Encouraging workers to participate in disciplined unions that used peaceful means to seek modest improvements in wages and work conditions, politicians attempted to make workers into moral, well-behaved, and nonpolitical subjects. By carving out a space outside of electoral politics for legitimate working-class advocacy, they hoped to use working-class identity toward conservative ends. Given Caballero's declining political fortunes, workers lost their enthusiasm for politics, and election turnouts dropped. Since the threat of demagoguery had been temporarily defused, the Santa Fe government could now begin to create the expanded, quasi-corporatist state imagined by Mosca and his allies; the legislature finally passed several of the labor reforms that had seemed too dangerous in the early days of democracy. In this way, Rosario drifted toward a more corporatist democracy, in which the preservation of elite hegemony depended upon the political demobilization of the working class.

But this tendency would not last. In turning away from militant labor protest and adopting a less confrontational attitude, Rosario's workers had not thrown off their identity as a social class, nor had they permanently rejected the idea of collective, working-class organization. On the contrary, by encouraging nonpolitical unionism, the dominant discourse of the mid-1920s reinforced working-class identity, which, despite the intentions of elite politicians, remained available for political mobilization in the future. Moreover, during the peaceful years of the mid-1920s, new residential patterns and new forms of mass culture helped consolidate workers' commitment to

this class-based identity. The unforeseen political consequences of working-class identity would become clear after 1926, when the emergence of a powerful Yrigoyenista movement within the national Radical party facilitated Caballero's second political resurgence. Sensing that the new faction's electoral triumph was inevitable, politicians of all stripes jumped on the Yrigoyenista bandwagon; in the pursuit of electoral victory, longtime anti-Caballeristas cautiously allied with their former enemy. Once Caballerismo was back in power, Rosarino workers quickly pressed their advantage. In the wake of the Yrigoyenistas' landslide victory in 1928, a massive strike wave exploded in Rosario. Virtually the entire political establishment now turned against Caballero, as it had always done in the face of rising class conflict. These politicians once again blamed labor unrest on Caballero's class politics and, more broadly, on the inevitable dangers of democracy itself. As workers pressed their class interests both inside and outside of the electoral arena, politicians again retreated from the democratic project.

Tango and the Reproduction of Difference: Working-Class Identity in the 1920s

During the first part of the 1920s, as I described in the previous chapter, most Rosarino politicians turned away from the project of turning workers into citizens. Predictably, as politicians retreated from the aggressive pursuit of working-class votes, workers seemed to lose interest in politics. Election-day turnouts had already declined from around 70 percent in the beginning of the democratic era to 64 percent in 1918. In the provincial election of 1922, with Caballero calling on his supporters to abstain from voting, only 58 percent of those registered in Rosario cast ballots, a low total given the fact that Argentine law made voting compulsory.¹ As the decade wore on, the apparent apathy of the electorate became a source of concern to those observers who remained committed to the democratic ideal of an active, engaged citizenry. *La Capital* blamed the parties for this widespread indifference to politics:

We live, in politics, as if dying, it has been said recently. And, in effect, a monstrous spirit of compliance is evident everywhere. There is no life, no movement, no action. . . . We lack political education, perhaps more up above than on the ground. Once the electoral campaign is over, political leaders are silent and return to the club or to their homes, only coming out to secure appointments. . . . The province suffers from the laziness of the opposition parties.²

According to this analysis, voters were staying home on election day because the competing parties gave them no meaningful options. And, in a sense, *La Capital* was right. By successfully isolating Caballero, Rosario's major parties had removed any direct appeals to the working class from the political marketplace. As a result, workers had fewer reasons to believe that their votes would make a difference.

The growing political apathy of Rosario workers was accompanied by a decline in the mobilizational capacity of the city's labor movement. The massive labor unrest of the postwar years had begun to dissipate as early as mid-1921. By 1923, Rosario, like the country as a whole, had embarked on a period of sustained labor peace, much to the relief of those who had worried that class conflict would undermine the social order. In its report for 1924, the police department celebrated the "absence of so-called professional agitators" in Rosario's unions as well as the tendency of the local labor movement "to channel itself into legal means of struggle."³ The anarchist press noted the same trend but drew less sanguine conclusions. By 1927, one local anarchist newspaper concluded that Argentina had become a "*República de serviles*," in which "the people, that meek beast of burden, has lost even the simplest notions of dignity."⁴ The anarchists' repeated description of workers as inhuman, submissive, and undignified beasts betrayed their belief that workers had proven themselves incapable of ever attaining the class consciousness necessary to confront their exploiters. In much the same way as mainstream politicians had lost faith in the project of transforming workers into citizens, anarchist labor organizers increasingly doubted the viability of building a militant labor movement.

Accounting for the low level of strike activity during the mid-1920s is not difficult. Both in Rosario and elsewhere in Argentina, the strikes of the postwar years had been crushed by government repression, creating a mood of demoralization and resignation within the labor movement. Workers paid a high price for their militancy, suffering both job losses and police violence; their retreat from labor mobilization was a rational response to that experience. At the same time, the Argentine economy prospered during the 1920s, and while the fruits of that growth were hardly distributed equally, a certain social mobility was available to many workers. The possibility of individual social advancement probably made combative unionism seem both unnecessary and unappealing. In his important studies of the "popular sectors" in Buenos Aires during the interwar period, Luis Alberto Romero has emphasized, among other factors, the ability of workers to purchase small plots of land and become homeowners. Thanks to this opportunity, many workers were able to move out of the exclusively working-class tenement houses of downtown Buenos Aires and the area by the port, and into a series of new, outlying barrios, composed of a heterogeneous

mix of skilled and unskilled laborers, white-collar workers, teachers, professionals, small merchants, and others. In these barrios, Romero argues, a new popular culture emerged that was less oppositional and less explicitly working-class than that of preceding decades.⁵ Although much more work remains to be done on the development of new barrios in Rosario, some of these same processes were clearly at work in the city. Throughout the 1920s, for example, local newspapers ran advertisements for real estate auctions aimed at workers (*obreros*) and white-collar employees (*empleados*).⁶ Private entrepreneurs, in fact, had been offering inexpensive plots on the outskirts of the city since at least 1910.⁷ In suburban barrios such as Arroyito, Echesortu, Barrio Mendoza, and Barrio Godoy, manual laborers lived alongside shop owners and other more “middle-class” groups.

Nevertheless, the development of these new mixed neighborhoods did not by any means erase the distinctions between workers and the more elite sectors of local society. First of all, the multiclass composition of Rosario’s suburban barrios should not be exaggerated. Neighborhoods such as Refinería, Talleres, Arroyito, and Barrio Calzada were still regarded as primarily working-class areas.⁸ Second, the purchase of a new house often represented only a marginal improvement in a worker’s social status. The Rosario press was filled with denunciations of shoddy construction by private companies selling houses for workers, as well as of the lack or unreliability of potable water, electricity, and public transportation in the new barrios.⁹ Moreover, the geographical proximity of different social classes did not necessarily blur the distinctions among them; a visitor to Arroyito, for example, was struck by the contrast between the occasional “comfortable chalet” and the more common “*ranchito modestísimo*” of a working-class family.¹⁰ Third, the geographical and psychological distance between work and residence that seems to have characterized much of Buenos Aires was not always present in Rosario, where several suburban neighborhoods developed around major places of employment. Many of the city’s unions had their headquarters in the new barrios, and anarchists, syndicalists, and communists all seem to have directed their organizing energies toward these parts of the city.¹¹ Finally, opportunities for upward mobility were, of course, not available to all. Many Rosarino workers could not afford to purchase a house and were forced instead to pay high rents.¹² Moreover, even during the prosperous 1920s, *La Capital* noted that the suburban barrios were filled with poor people whose wages did not cover the basic necessities of life.¹³

Due in part to the enduring relevance and visibility of class divisions in their lives, Rosarino workers retained their class identity throughout the 1920s. While workers retreated from the public sphere, demonstrating far less enthusiasm for both electoral politics and labor protest, this retreat did not reflect the erosion of working-class

identification. On the contrary, the rare moments during these years when workers did act in energetic defense of their class interests indicate that class-based solidarities remained alive, available for mobilization in special circumstances. In May 1924, for example, Rosario's unions joined workers throughout Argentina in protesting the implementation of a new national pension law. Although the Radical government had proposed the law as a much-needed benefit for workers, syndicalist and communist union leaders rejected the legislation as a bourgeois ploy aimed at preventing social unrest. Meanwhile, many rank-and-file union members were outraged at the idea that the law required them to contribute a percentage of their hard-earned wages to the pension fund. When Rosario's two labor federations called a general strike in early May, workers enthusiastically walked off the job, shutting down most commercial and industrial activity in the city for several days. According to the local police department's very conservative estimates, thirty-one different unions and more than six thousand workers participated in the strike.¹⁴ The strike against the pension law was certainly exceptional during this period of sustained labor peace. Moreover, the success of the general strike was due in part to the participation of employers, who also resisted the forced contributions the law would have required. Still, the willingness of the rank and file to follow their union leaders out on the picket line demonstrated that working-class solidarities had not disappeared. Four years later, a massive strike wave would more definitively confirm the continuing vitality of working-class identity in Rosario.

But even when they were not participating in strikes, Rosarino workers retained a class-based identity. Although the rarity of labor mobilizations during the mid-1920s suggests that workers had retreated into a more private, less overtly conflictive world, it was a world that remained marked in fundamental ways by class divisions. The traces of working-class identity, in fact, coursed through the popular culture of the period, shaping workers' leisure activities. The mid-1920s saw the unprecedented diffusion of mass culture in Rosario. The phonograph became a common fixture during this period, and the city gained its first radio station in 1923.¹⁵ Movie theaters were also built throughout the city during the 1910s and 1920s, many of them in the outlying barrios where workers lived. Both Refinería and Talleres, for example, had theaters as early as the 1910s. By the 1920s, there were movie theaters in Echesortu, Arroyito, Barrio Godoy, and many other neighborhoods.¹⁶ Even though recorded music, radio programs, and films enjoyed a cross-class audience, these mass cultural products remained thoroughly preoccupied with the representation of class differences. As radio listeners and filmgoers, Rosarino workers were not assimilated into a homogenous, middle-class culture; instead, the new mass culture

continually reinforced workers' sense of themselves as a distinct social class.

Of all the elements of mass culture in the 1920s, the cinema probably had the greatest potential to unify Rosarinos of different social classes. Not only were films aimed at a cross-class audience, but by the late 1920s, most of the movies being shown in Argentina were imported from the United States. Although World War I had facilitated a boom in the nascent Argentine film industry, the end of the war opened the door for Hollywood to assert itself in foreign markets. By the late 1920s, Argentine-made films accounted for only 10 percent of the money spent on movie tickets in Argentina.¹⁷ With viewers subjected to a homogenous product and one that was increasingly produced outside the local context, one might expect that the cinema would have contributed to an erosion of preexisting class identities. However, as historians of mass culture in the United States have demonstrated, the homogenizing effect of 1920s cinema is easily exaggerated.¹⁸ Because the films of this era were silent, spectators participated more actively than they would once the "talkie" was introduced and audiences were forced to sit silently. As a result, the particular messages that Rosarinos took away from the movies they saw were shaped as much by the context in which they saw them as they were by the images on the screen. In working-class barrios such as Refinería and Talleres, workers would have watched films in the company of others of their own social class. In this context, moviegoing could well have reinforced class solidarities. Even in the new, cross-class barrios, movie theaters may well have been segmented by class. Knowing that a trip to the local theater would involve rubbing elbows with workers, the more well-to-do may have opted to travel to one of the more luxurious theaters downtown. In any case, because many of Rosario's movie theaters were frequently used for union assemblies, workers might well have associated them with class-based endeavors.¹⁹ Finally, working-class subjects were by no means absent in the films of the day. To cite one example, José Agustín Ferreyra's *La muchacha del arrabal* (The Girl from the Slums, 1922) emulated the depiction of poverty typical of the Argentine tango.²⁰

In fact, the reproduction of class differences was nowhere more apparent than in the lyrics of the tango songs so popular at the time. The decade of the 1920s corresponds to the "Golden Age" of the tango, the period during which tango evolved from a dance associated with the brothels of the Buenos Aires underworld to the major musical form in Argentine popular culture. Thanks to the phonograph and the radio, the lyrics of tango songs became far more prominent in this period, and singers such as Carlos Gardel achieved unprecedented fame. The tremendous success of the Argentine tango in Europe and the United States after 1910 gave the

music and the dance a new respectability in their country of origin; by the 1920s, after a period of heated resistance on the part of elites and intellectuals, the tango had gained a loyal following among Argentines of all social classes.²¹ But as with silent films, the cross-class composition of tango's audience does not mean that the genre had a homogenizing effect, or that it worked to blur or erase class differences. On the contrary, these differences were continually enacted and reproduced in the lyrics of tango songs.

Among the most repeated themes in the tangos of the 1920s was the working-class fantasy of easy upward mobility. Tango songs such as "Lunes" ("Monday," 1929) contrasted the depressing world of manual labor in the factory and on the docks with the romantic and exciting atmosphere of the tango bar, where people lived the "wild life [*vida bacana*]." ²² Other tango lyrics held out the promise of a more permanent escape from proletarian existence. "Seguí mi consejo" ("Follow My Advice," 1928), for example, instructed listeners to forget about work and live the life of a wealthy playboy.²³ Of course, some tangos narrated more ambiguous or unsuccessful attempts at upward mobility. The poor girl who seeks to escape poverty either through prostitution or by becoming a cabaret dancer was a common figure, while tangos such as "Giuseppe, el zapatero" ("Giuseppe the shoemaker," 1930) told stories of immigrants mired in poverty.²⁴ Still, the tango as a genre offered workers the promise of a life of wealth and comfort. The marketing of Carlos Gardel, tango's biggest star, is a case in point. Always photographed in a tuxedo or "smoking jacket," Gardel emulated the lifestyle of the idle rich. And yet, Gardel's fans were well aware of the singer's lower-class origins; his most common nickname, "*el morocho del Abasto*," referred both to his dark complexion, read as a sign of his humble background, and to his origins in a working-class neighborhood of Buenos Aires. Gardel, then, was seen as a working-class boy who had achieved wealth and fame. As Marta Savigliano has demonstrated, Gardel's 1935 film *El Día Que Me Quieras* enacted this message of upward mobility. In the film, Gardel plays a wealthy young man in love with a lower-class dancer. Watching the movie, Gardel's working-class fans would have been thrilled to see one of their own successfully inhabiting the role of a rich man saving a woman from poverty.²⁵

The prevalence of this fantasy of upward mobility in Argentine popular culture of the 1920s went beyond the tango. The romance fiction of the popular "weekly novels" also narrated stories of escape from poverty. In this case, the protagonists were most often poor women who pursued upward mobility by falling in love and marrying wealthy men.²⁶ Of course, the desire to leave the working class and attain a more comfortable lifestyle might be seen as a departure from class consciousness, a

rejection of the project of collective organization in pursuit of improvements for the working class as a whole. However, even if the tango failed this sort of ideological litmus test, the genre nevertheless reinforced workers' class identity. Listening to songs about working-class characters seeking to escape their dreary lives, workers must have recognized themselves. Similarly, the symbolic power of Gardel's smoking jacket depended on the fact that workers remembered the class origins of the man wearing it and could therefore picture themselves in his place.

The fantasy of upward mobility did not exhaust the subject matter of tango lyrics. In fact, rather than engage in utopian fantasy, many tangos of the Golden Age adopted a bitter, disillusioned attitude toward the world.²⁷ In a famous essay written in 1930, Jorge Luis Borges identified a change in the content of tango lyrics beginning in the 1920s. According to Borges, the early tango had celebrated the rebelliousness and violence of the *compadrito*, the prototypical street tough of the poor barrios of Buenos Aires. Much like the gaucho of criollista fiction, the *compadrito* was lauded in the early tangos for his courage, virility, and willingness to fight. By the 1920s, Borges laments, these themes had begun to disappear; instead of brave *compadritos*, the protagonists of later tangos were unhappy men, wallowing in their suffering and taking pleasure from the suffering of others.²⁸ Commenting on the same lyrical evolution, Eduardo Archetti argues that the tangos of the 1920s depict "the figure of the *compadrito* in a deep identity crisis."²⁹ In these tangos, the *compadrito* appears as a betrayed and humiliated man whose problems are no longer so easily solved through violence. The sense of insecurity and despair that pervades these tangos might well reflect the demoralization workers felt after the postwar labor mobilization had been decimated by state repression. Like the emphasis on individual upward mobility, the tango's preoccupation with suffering fit well with workers' drift toward a more private, less confrontational attitude. The betrayals and humiliations narrated in these tangos almost always concerned romantic or sexual love, a preoccupation with personal relationships that mirrored workers' retreat from the public sphere.

Like the fantasies of escaping poverty, the tangos of betrayal reinforced working-class identity. As Savigliano has shown, these tangos usually described a competition over women, fought out by men of different social classes. In song after song, a poor or working-class man complains that a rich man has seduced the woman he loves.³⁰ Many of these tangos took the form of confessions in which the *compadrito* admits that he is powerless to hold onto his woman. Also common were tangos criticizing poor women for betraying their class and predicting for them a future of suffering:

Babe of my neighborhood, beautiful gal,
who drives by in a car with a big shot [. . .]
Think, poor babe, beautiful gal,
about how your beauty one day will fade [. . .]
You think of aristocrats!
Soon you'll see that your crazy dreams
were soap bubbles!³¹

Like so many other tangos, this one reproduces and even foregrounds class differences. The singer's moral judgment only makes sense in a world of visible class divisions, a world in which class loyalty is expected and individual upward mobility comes at a cost. Even if the popularity of the tango in the 1920s reflected workers' tendency to abandon confrontational, class-based mobilization and to participate in mass cultural forms with larger, cross-class audiences, tango lyrics continually reinforced a view of the world as divided between rich and poor, between those who could afford to enjoy cabarets and seduce beautiful women and those who toiled just to make a living. Listening to Carlos Gardel, in other words, did not challenge Rosarino workers' sense of themselves as belonging to a distinct social class. This sense—this class-based view of the world and of their place in it—persisted among workers throughout the years of labor peace. When political circumstances changed in Rosario in 1928, creating what looked like a golden opportunity for renewed labor mobilization, workers would not hesitate to take advantage.

The Conservative Turn to Class, 1924-1927

While the mass culture of the mid-1920s was reinforcing Rosarino workers' commitment to a class identity, electoral politics offered little or no space for the expression of working-class interests. During the 1924 campaign, a weakened Caballero supported Mosca's faction, despite the established, antilabor credentials of its vice-gubernatorial candidate, Juan Cepeda.³² With Caballero obediently parroting the party line, the only faction willing to speak out on behalf of workers was a small, splinter group of Radicals—the so-called Opposition Radicals—who had broken with Mosca after the governor vetoed the reformed provincial constitution in 1921³³ (see figure 1). As one of the leaders of this faction, the old Menchaca supporter, Alcides Greca, did occasionally remind working-class voters of Cepeda's antilabor actions as Rosario's police chief. But Greca and his allies hardly presented themselves as a pro-labor party. Their campaign rhetoric emphasized their support

for the vetoed constitution, a position that was motivated by respect for traditional democratic principles, such as municipal autonomy and the separation of church and state, and that in no way distinguished them from the Progressive Democrats. Still, it is telling that this small party did manage a respectable third-place finish in Rosario in 1924, with almost 6,700 votes; Greca's limited, rhetorical defense of the working class might well have been enough to sway some workers away from the other parties.³⁴ In any case, with working-class issues largely left out of the campaign, the PDP won for the third consecutive time in Rosario. And as in previous elections, this result allowed Mosca's faction to retain its hold on the provincial government; Ricardo Aldao and Juan Cepeda were inaugurated in May 1924.

But if working-class interests were successfully kept out of politics, they did not recede from public consciousness. On the contrary, just as workers retained their class identity in these times of labor peace, Rosario's mainstream press exhibited a heightened preoccupation with working-class problems and issues. During this period, most newspapers, regardless of their political affiliation, set aside a regular space for labor coverage. Newspapers as diverse as José Guillermo Bertotto's *Democracia*, sympathetic to the PDP, as well as the pro-government papers, *Reflejos* and *Crónica*, all had a regular labor affairs column. These columns were explicitly intended to advance the cause of workers. *Democracia*, for example, declared that given the current weakness of the unions, workers needed an independent and unbiased source of information on the labor movement:

With the proletariat we will defend from these free columns all that in our view constitute honest, sensible and intelligent actions, reserving the right to offer reasoned and disinterested criticism whenever we consider it necessary. Workers, make use of this section, which *Democracia* offers you as a frank demonstration of sympathy.³⁵

While placing itself on the side of labor, Bertotto's paper also implied that it had a very specific view of the kind of actions workers ought to undertake. In fact, the labor columns of most Rosario papers attempted to reinforce a particular model of appropriate working-class behavior. By focusing almost exclusively on union matters, the columns suggested that other spheres, such as politics, were not specifically relevant to the working class. These columns repeatedly stressed the need for unification within the labor movement, arguing that only well-organized, disciplined unions could defend workers' economic interests. They even called for workers to increase their class consciousness and make "intelligent use" of the right to strike in order to resist the

extreme demands of exploitative capitalists.³⁶

Coming after the violent disturbances of the 1917-1922 period, this frank acceptance of working-class organization and action might seem surprising. But the public preoccupation with labor issues must be interpreted in light of the pervasiveness of class divisions in Rosario. Unable to deny the continued vitality of working-class identity, elites ironically turned to labor unions as an antidote to social disorder. *La Capital*, for example, argued that the railroad unions had achieved impressive benefits for their workers precisely because they had pursued these improvements in an orderly fashion:

The economic, political or social conquests definitively [won by] those labor corporations or nuclei that have observed, in their union actions, a norm of conduct that conforms to the strict demands of order and the rule of law, demonstrate with the clear evidence of an axiom, that this is the only viable path to assure the triumph of any cause based on the solid principles of equity and right.³⁷

According to *La Capital*, well-organized unions both improved the lives of workers and helped preserve order. In a sense, Rosarino anarchists agreed with the mainstream press. They too recognized the conservative role that labor unions could play. During the mid-1920s, anarchist activists began to see working-class organizations as a threat to their ability to forge a revolutionary movement. As one anarchist newspaper put it, "unionism [*el sindicalismo*] has not been nor will it ever be anarchist, because it deals with a class organization that brings workers together in order to achieve small economic advances and because it is in essence reformist."³⁸ Both elites and anarchists, then, came to see nonpolitical working-class organizations as potential bulwarks of the social order.

While Rosarino elites grew more comfortable with the idea of disciplined labor unions, they remained troubled by democratic politics. Several observers actually blamed democracy itself for spreading discontent among workers. In a lecture on the high rents faced by working people, Ramón Araya, a Rosarino engineer, blamed the problem on politicians who insisted on imposing an ever-increasing tax burden on property owners. Meanwhile, these same politicians attracted working-class votes by blaming the high rents on greedy landlords and by passing a law (the 1920 Rents Law) that allegedly infringed on property rights. For Araya, this situation was the inevitable result of Argentina's political system: "Governed by parties and by representatives of those parties and not by your representatives, it is natural that they serve the interests of their own party and not those of the people or totality."³⁹ And

Araya went further still: The mechanism that made this destructive partisanship possible was universal suffrage. He argued that only by restricting suffrage to those with “political education and property” would it be possible to create a democracy based on “the collective will.”⁴⁰ Araya suggested that if the president was unwilling to abolish the parties and reorganize the government, the army should intervene.⁴¹ In an article printed in the Argentine Patriotic League’s Rosario newspaper, the League’s president, Manuel Carlés, made a similar argument, attacking the democratic notion of rule by the majority. This principle, he claimed, encouraged factious parties incapable of acting for the good of the nation. He called on citizens to vote not for the representatives of particular parties, but for Argentines.⁴²

The antidemocratic arguments of Araya and Carlés were premised on the same logic that had dominated political discourse throughout the democratic era. Argentine elites had long hoped that a well-designed democracy—one that established a clear barrier between class interests and party politics—would unify the nation and preserve elite hegemony by producing virtuous, de-classed citizens. But after more than a decade of democratic politics, observers such as Araya and Carlés argued that the new political system had produced the opposite effect: It had yielded a debilitating partisanship that created rather than resolved social tensions. Although the notion that parties should be abolished and suffrage restricted represented an extreme position in the mid-1920s, this type of argument was indicative of a growing consensus that saw democratic politics as a factor exacerbating class conflict and social disorder. In their single-minded pursuit of votes, parties and politicians seemed to turn tenants against landlords and workers against bosses in a way that disciplined, responsible labor unions did not. Believing that political parties always fomented social discord in order to attract votes, many Rosarinos now looked to working-class organizations as a means of disciplining the masses, of channeling their demands through orderly processes.

But if labor unions were going to play this conservative role, they needed to behave appropriately; more than anything else, they needed to stay out of politics. *La Capital*’s hostile reaction to the 1924 general strike against the pension law reflected this insistence that working-class organizations remain nonpolitical. *La Capital* might have been expected to be sympathetic to this movement, given the active participation of many of Rosario’s businessmen. But the newspaper immediately condemned the workers’ actions. For *La Capital*, the strike’s political motives placed it outside the realm of legitimate working-class action: “An attempt at a general strike that aims neither at economic improvement nor at moral dignification constitutes an attack against the community [*la colectividad*].” The editors argued that workers should be patient while Congress carefully studied the impact of the law and corrected whatever errors

it may contain.⁴³ In condemning the strike, the newspaper did not deny the workers' analysis of the law's imperfections. Rather, *La Capital* denied their right to intervene in the issue at all. By using their class organizations to oppose a law, workers were injecting class interests into politics and thereby threatening the unity of the body politic.

If working-class politics posed the greatest threat to the social order, working-class immorality was a close second. During the decade before the advent of democracy in 1912, Rosario's newspapers had elaborated an image of the "model worker" who would abstain from the three vices that threatened to undo him: alcohol, gambling, and idleness.⁴⁴ The mid-1920s saw a resurgence of these concerns. Urging the police to crack down on the illegal gambling houses that operated throughout the working-class suburbs of Rosario, the major newspapers warned that these operations undermined workers' industriousness. *La Capital*, for example, argued that Santa Fe needed an antigambling law "in order to save a great number of homes [and] to avoid the moral and economic consequences that derive from the devaluation of work as a consequence of the promise of easy winnings."⁴⁵ The newspaper predicted that the rise of gambling would lead to the breakdown of the working-class family and, even worse, that it would make workers unproductive. That the antigambling movement was directed primarily at workers became clear when the provincial legislature voted to extend the Rosario Jockey Club's tax-exempt status. Defending themselves from charges of hypocrisy, the legislators who backed the tax exemption argued that the racetrack's two-peso entrance fee restricted gambling to those who could afford it.⁴⁶ Gambling, it seemed, was to be combated only insofar as it threatened the morality and discipline of the working class.

At least as worrisome as gambling during these years was the widespread practice of prostitution. Although legal in Rosario since 1874,⁴⁷ prostitution had long been a preoccupation of reformers, who tried to protect minors and to close down "clandestine," or unlicensed, brothels. This concern intensified in the mid-1920s, when several newspapers began calling for the police to "clean up" the notorious Pichincha neighborhood, home to many of the city's illegal brothels and gambling houses. The local newspaper *La Reacción* was especially active in denouncing these operations, launching what it called a "moralizing campaign" against gambling and prostitution in 1925.⁴⁸ To the editors of this paper, the danger of prostitution lay in its potential to corrupt workers, a danger heightened by Pichincha's location in the heart of the heavily working-class, ninth electoral district. They argued that every city had neighborhoods of "pimps, vice and licentiousness," but ideally the municipal authorities kept these activities far away from working-class residential zones. However, in Rosario, "the neighborhood set aside for this type of commerce

is located precisely in the place where the working population is densest. [The] neighborhood . . . is doomed not to progress so long as this epidemic exists."⁴⁹ Like gambling, uncontrolled prostitution threatened to make workers immoral and undisciplined. The newspapers presented male workers as the victims of unscrupulous, usually foreign pimps, who made a profit by exploiting workers' moral weaknesses.⁵⁰ The campaign against prostitution redeployed some of the same discursive elements used in attacks on caudillismo. In the same way that undisciplined and weak-willed workers could be tricked by demagogues like Caballero into casting unwise votes, they were also easy prey for the merchants of vice.

The campaign against gambling and prostitution, directed explicitly at workers, was another aspect of the attempt to foment a conservative working-class identity. These vices were condemned not because they prevented citizens from fulfilling their civic obligations, but because they kept poor people from being productive workers. The denunciations of gambling and prostitution, in conjunction with the newspapers' labor columns, constructed an ideal model of disciplined, nonpolitical, working-class behavior. Such behavior would enable workers to contribute effectively to the well-being of the whole community. On the eve of the Carnival celebration in 1925, one newspaper warned that

these days easily become an escape valve for the rudeness and social indiscipline that is congenital to certain masses of deficient education, and what should be a moderate relaxation of the spirit degenerates into license, misconduct and disorder. . . . A people's culture is measured by the mutual respect and good manners observed in these demonstrations of jubilation, since such states demonstrate the efficacy of the moral restraints with which [the culture] manages the different classes that co-exist in the collective organism.⁵¹

This admonition suggested that the avoidance of class-based social disorder required not that class distinctions disappear, but that the uneducated lower classes learn to behave properly. As the intellectuals in the Rosario press turned away from the project of transforming workers into virtuous citizens, they embraced the less ambitious task of making well-behaved, moral workers.

Passing Laws in Peaceful Times

Politicians in Rosario and throughout the province of Santa Fe joined the newspapers in attempting to foment a conservative working-class identity. From 1920 to 1924, the Mosca administration had sought to create just this sort of identity through

corporatist organization and expanded state power. Although Mosca's successor, Ricardo Aldao, did not promote an explicitly corporatist program, he did endorse a series of labor reforms. Declaring that his government "recognizes that the province must carry out a vast piece of work to benefit the productive classes," Aldao called on the legislature to enact factory hygiene and safety regulations, limitations on the length of the workday, a minimum wage, old-age pensions, worker's compensation, domestic work regulations, and other labor laws.⁵² In all likelihood, Aldao was just paying the customary lip service to progressive labor legislation, a gesture made by every governor since Menchaca. But for the first time in Santa Fe, several significant labor reforms actually were enacted during the Aldao administration. Not coincidentally, these laws were passed during the term of a governor who had never portrayed himself as a friend of labor, and after almost every advocate of working-class interests had been removed from the provincial legislature. With the postwar strike wave several years in the past, and with elected officials explicitly renouncing any effort to attract working-class votes, the legislature was finally able to overcome the rancorous partisanship that had long stymied efforts to pass progressive labor measures.

Since the beginning of the democratic period, a series of legislators tried unsuccessfully to enact reformist labor legislation. In 1913 and 1914, a small group of deputies from the Rosario area enthusiastically introduced several reforms, including an eight-hour-day measure and a bill to regulate female and child labor. But none of these proposals became law; Santa Fe's senators refused to consider the pro-labor measures because they feared that the Caballeristas would use them to win working-class votes.⁵³ In 1919, Jorge Ferri, a Caballerista deputy from Rosario, again introduced bills establishing the eight-hour day and regulating female and child labor, along with a measure that would create arbitration boards to resolve labor conflicts. During the same session, Elizaldista deputies proposed a bill to create a provincial labor department and another to provide for the construction of housing for workers. Finally, Progressive Democrats introduced their own version of the housing bill.⁵⁴ But just as in 1914, partisan divisions and the fear of a mobilized working class combined to prevent these proposals from becoming law. The 1919 legislative session unfolded in the context of widespread labor unrest and the breakdown of the Dissident party. Legislators of all parties worried that their opponents would use labor reforms to win working-class votes. Each party made its own proposals so that it could not be accused of ignoring workers. But at the same time, none of the parties were willing to allow its opponents to claim credit for helping the working class.⁵⁵ In the end, only the eight-hour-day bill made it through the provincial chamber of deputies, and

none of the measures was even considered by the senate.

In 1920, the chamber of deputies created a social legislation committee to promote and evaluate labor reform projects. Led by the Progressive Democrat José Guillermo Bertotto, the committee discussed and approved several of the same bills that had been introduced the previous year. But the chamber as a whole remained sharply divided along partisan lines and did not consider the labor projects. As Rosario workers continued to strike, the social legislation committee did not even meet during the 1921 session.⁵⁶ Significant labor laws would not be passed until the fear of class politics had abated and proposals could be convincingly portrayed as pragmatic, nonpartisan measures, rather than as electoral ploys aimed at attracting workers to a particular party.

In 1926, conditions were finally ripe for the passage of progressive labor legislation. Over three years had passed since the end of the violent strike wave of the postwar period, and no significant episode of labor unrest had occurred in Rosario since the general strike held to protest the national pension law in 1924. Moreover, while labor peace made the prospect of pro-worker legislation less threatening, political developments made this legislative session even more auspicious. As I discuss in more detail below, a schism within the national Radical party led to a major realignment within Santa Fe politics in 1924 and 1925. In that period, Radicals in Buenos Aires divided into two factions: One supported the current president, Marcelo de Alvear, while the other remained loyal to former President Yrigoyen. In Santa Fe, Governor Aldao eventually inclined toward Alvear's side, while the various Radical factions who opposed the Aldao administration coalesced into an Yrigoyenista party. Sensing an opportunity, Ricardo Caballero managed to insinuate himself into this new party and thereby to recover much of the influence he had lost in previous years. In the 1926 election for provincial legislators, Aldao's Radicals won handily in every department in Santa Fe, with the single exception of Rosario. There, the new Yrigoyenista party outpolled both the PDP and the pro-Aldao Radicals, winning five seats in the chamber of deputies and one in the senate.⁵⁷

The presence of these Yrigoyenista legislators—several of whom were close allies of Caballero—would have made the passage of significant labor reform difficult to say the least. However, in a blatantly partisan maneuver, the pro-Aldao majority in the chamber of deputies prevented the five Rosario Yrigoyenistas from taking their seats. By insisting that the Rosario election be investigated and then dragging its feet in carrying out the investigation, the majority was able to keep the potentially dangerous Caballerista faction out of the chamber. With the five Rosario representatives excluded, there remained six Yrigoyenistas out of a total of thirty-six deputies, but

none of these six was a follower of Caballero.⁵⁸ With the chamber thus purged of explicitly pro-worker deputies, labor legislation could be considered without the threat that legislators would then use it to win working-class votes. In fact, faced with the apparent revival of Caballerismo, pro-government Radicals probably felt a certain amount of pressure to produce reformist labor laws. Caballero's main source of political strength was his ability to present himself as the defender of the working class while depicting his opponents as the workers' enemies. The 1926 legislative session provided Caballero's foes with an opportunity to demonstrate that their brand of politics could, in fact, produce results that benefited labor. By passing progressive labor laws, they could deprive the Caballeristas of ammunition for their electoral propaganda.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, a group of anti-Yrigoyenistas succeeded in driving several pieces of labor legislation through the chamber by presenting them as nonpartisan, scientific measures designed to improve society as a whole. Leading this campaign was the pro-Aldao Radical Pío Pandolfo, who, from his position as head of the social legislation committee, introduced bills to create a provincial labor department, establish the eight-hour day, ban night work in bakeries, guarantee factory hygiene, and require worker's compensation in agricultural enterprises. Pandolfo promoted these measures by arguing that legislators must acknowledge the inevitability of class conflict in the modern economy:

Not to analyze what is happening around us, not to follow the profound upheaval that this twentieth-century civilization is suffering, is to prepare the path of suicide, is to bring disorganization to the community, is to undermine the democratic foundations of our republic [and] the stability of the state and to incline toward demagoguery and unconsciousness.⁵⁹

Since unchecked class conflict hurt everyone, Pandolfo argued, the state needed to intervene by enacting labor laws that would ameliorate social antagonisms.

In the course of the debates on Pandolfo's proposals, other deputies were even more explicit in arguing that the bills would benefit all Argentines and were not merely handouts to the working class. Ricardo Argonz, a Progressive Democrat from Rosario, argued that while the experience of more advanced nations proved the need for an eight-hour day, labor reforms such as this one must not be designed according to "humanitarian criteria." Citing the national pension law that provoked the general strike of 1924, he warned of "the grave disturbances occasioned by laws that are nothing but messes poorly cobbled together in order to ingratiate oneself with public opinion at election time."⁶⁰ For Argonz, labor laws were to be scientifically

molded in order to benefit the whole society; they were not to be used to attract working-class votes. Similarly, Argonz objected to the bill to prohibit night work in bakeries on the grounds that the measure would raise the price of bread while imposing too high a burden on bakery owners, thereby undermining the welfare of society as a whole: "Labor laws that do not benefit the community [*la colectividad*] are an obstacle to industrial progress."⁶¹ In the end, supporters of the bill were only able to secure its passage by promising that this pro-labor law would be complemented by laws designed to benefit other sectors of society.⁶²

In a burst of unprecedented productivity, the chamber of deputies approved every piece of legislation promoted by Pandolfo and his colleagues on the social legislation committee. And unlike in previous years, these bills drew an equally enthusiastic response from the provincial senate. Without debate, the senate approved the eight-hour day, the creation of the provincial labor department, and the agricultural worker's compensation law in 1927.⁶³ Pandolfo's ability to frame these bills in unthreatening terms—to portray them as scientific responses to the problem of class conflict, rather than as part of a scheme to attract working-class votes—helps explain their success. The exclusion of the Caballeristas from the chamber of deputies undoubtedly facilitated this strategy. By keeping the Rosario deputies out of the chamber, the legislators prevented them from using the labor reform bills as electoral propaganda directed at the working class.

In fact, the threat of class politics was as terrifying to legislators in 1926 as it had been in 1914. Even as the senate passed Pandolfo's labor bills, it was unwilling to approve a minimum wage measure introduced by the Caballerista Tobías Arribillaga, now a provincial senator. Even though the proposal, which would have established a minimum wage for public employees, was consistent with the stated positions of the various parties, Arribillaga's political leanings scared the other senators away. Arribillaga was explicit in presenting himself as a representative of workers:

[I]t is well known that more than once I have exposed my interests and my person [by joining] the ranks of striking workers asking for fair life improvements. . . . Not only criollos participated in those movements, but also men of all corners of the world, those who come to work in the modern way, transforming the Republic into a great factory of wheat and beef, but, Mr. President, to the great detriment of the national soul. I must confess that I have this negative view of current life and that I prefer the criollo in the straw hut of olden times . . . because it better agrees with our idiosyncrasies and with our tradition as Argentines. We seek by way of the vote the redemption of

laboring people, particularly that of the Argentines who wander about as pariahs, without anyone remembering them, stripped of all rights because of their ignorance, which is perpetuated in order to exploit them more easily.⁶⁴

This rhetoric, redolent with the nostalgic, criollista images that had long been a staple of Caballerista discourse, contrasted sharply with the scientific and class-neutral language employed by Pandolfo. Given that Arribillaga presented himself as a defender of workers, his minimum wage proposal must have seemed a blatant attempt to solidify his hold over his working-class constituency. For the time being, the senators ignored Arribillaga's proposal, while embracing the more acceptable measures already approved by the chamber of deputies. But the conditions that made possible the legislative achievements of 1926 and 1927 would not last. The exclusion of Rosario's Yrigoyenista deputies could not prevent another resurgence of Caballerismo.

Yrigoyenismo and the Second Rebirth of Caballero, 1924-1928

Even as the Santa Fe legislature was busy enacting the province's first significant labor laws, a major schism within the Radical party was reshaping national politics. Although President Marcelo T. de Alvear, elected in 1922, had been handpicked by Yrigoyen, the new president quickly incurred the opposition of those Radicals who remained loyal to his predecessor. In large measure, this opposition was directed at Alvear's orthodox financial policies. With the Argentine economy reeling from the effects of a postwar depression, the administration imposed severe cuts on state spending, firing many of the employees appointed by the previous government. In 1924, with Yrigoyenista opposition on the rise, the so-called Antipersonalista party was formed by Radicals hostile to Yrigoyen. There were now two separate Radical parties in Argentina.⁶⁵ Within a year, the breakup of the UCR would transform politics in Santa Fe province, enabling the resurrection of Ricardo Caballero, reawakening fears of class politics, and eventually opening the door to yet another large-scale labor mobilization.

In the spirit of self-preservation, Governor Aldao tried to avoid taking sides in the split between Antipersonalistas and Yrigoyenistas. Within the administration, one faction, led by Enrique Mosca, tried to push the governor toward President Alvear. Antipersonalismo's rhetorical hostility to clientelism fit well with Mosca's well-established opposition to class politics. But the Aldao administration was not entirely under Mosca's influence; an Yrigoyenista group, led by Armando Antille, a national deputy from northern Santa Fe, vied for the governor's ear. In late 1924 and

early 1925, Aldao desperately sought to hold the party together by charting his own course between the two factions.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, both sides accused the governor of turning his administration over to the “oligarchic,” anti-Radical elements who had been in power before 1912.

On 15 March 1925, the so-called Unified Radical party—the party that had brought Aldao to power—finally fell apart. Led by Armando Antille, who was at that point president of the party’s provincial committee, a significant group of party leaders formally broke from the administration and declared their loyalty to the national Yrigoyenista leadership. In its first manifesto, the new Yrigoyenista party of Santa Fe gave very little indication of its ideological orientation, limiting itself instead to attacking Aldao for favoring “oligarchic” interests and for engaging in fraud. But if the party as a whole shied away from declaring a specific program, at least one of its factions was a known quantity. Along with Antille, the Santa Fe Yrigoyenistas appointed Ricardo Caballero delegate to the national committee.⁶⁷ Since Antille’s strength lay in the northern part of the province, this appointment seemed to make Caballero the *de facto* leader of the party’s Rosario wing.

Caballero’s inclusion in the leadership of Santa Fe’s new Yrigoyenista party represented a major comeback for Rosario’s most notorious politician. Although he retained his seat in the national Senate, Caballero had lost much of his ability to shape political discourse in Santa Fe. The split between President Alvear and the Yrigoyenistas gave him an opportunity to regain his influence within provincial politics. To a certain extent, the schism within the national Radical party broke along class lines. Wealthy interests in the export sector tended to remain loyal to Alvear, because they stood to gain from the president’s conservative economic policies. In opposition, the Yrigoyenistas mobilized middle- and lower-class groups by demanding an increase in state spending and hiring. Even though his own relationship with Yrigoyen had been strained at times,⁶⁸ Caballero jumped at the chance to join the anti-elite movement that was coalescing around the ex-president. By October 1924, Caballero’s name was being mentioned as a possible Yrigoyenista candidate for governor of the province of Córdoba.⁶⁹ A few months later, when Armando Antille and others decided to forge an Yrigoyenista party in Santa Fe, Caballero was able to recover political influence without leaving Rosario.

During this period, Caballero attempted to win back working-class support, while carefully disavowing any assault on the established social order. In a 1925 speech in the national Senate, he defended the national pension law that had provoked a general strike the previous year. Caballero argued that the law was meant to help workers and professed surprise that the unions had resisted it. What he

found particularly upsetting was that in opposing the bill, Rosarino workers had made common cause with business groups “who, since this country was organized, always opposed the political and economic redemption of the people.”⁷⁰ After chastising the unions in this way, Caballero used the rest of his speech to lay out his vision of how democracy should work. Declaring that his ideas would seem “limited” to leftist extremists but “demagogic” to the “representatives of privilege,” he attempted to carve out a third path, in which the ultimate goal of democracy was “economic liberty for the working masses.” He argued that private property was necessary, since progress depended upon “individual initiative,” but that this right must be limited by the state. Elsewhere, Caballero used the term “social solidarity” to describe this third way between rampant capitalism and communist revolution, a strategy by which the poor could be emancipated without engaging in class conflict.⁷¹ For example, by passing reformist labor legislation like the pension law, the state could help Argentine workers achieve their economic liberation.⁷²

Even as he stressed his commitment to the working class, Caballero continued to employ nostalgic, nationalist rhetoric. Speaking in the Senate in 1926, he once again offered his own interpretation of Argentine history, in which the rural caudillos of the past figured as the true national heroes. These legendary gaucho leaders, he argued, were not “wild and barbarous caudillos followed by savage multitudes, but rather men inspired by the heroic simplicity of the old fatherland.” They struggled courageously but in vain against the forces of “civilization” that modernized Argentina at the expense of the national spirit. Caballero thus combined a nationalist perspective with an attack on elite interests, a combination that was particularly evident when he applied the lessons of history to the present-day struggle of the Radical party: “Radicalism arose in order to save and reconstruct the spiritual unity of the Nation, to realize social justice within the borders of the fatherland, to achieve true democracy through the economic liberation of the people!” For Caballero, the struggle to rescue the nation’s identity and spirit was intimately tied to the struggle “to sweep away the remains of privilege.”⁷³ Invoking his criollista version of Argentine nationalism, Caballero continued to appeal to workers’ interests as a class oppressed and exploited by wealthy capitalists.

Although Caballero made no secret of his commitment to the working class, most of his new allies in the Yrigoyenista party did not subscribe to this form of class politics. Like the Radical factions Caballero had joined in the past, this new party was a heterogeneous alliance forged in order to defeat a common foe, in this case Aldao’s Unified Radical party. And as in the past, conditions of labor peace probably facilitated the alliance by making Caballerismo seem less dangerous. With the working

class demobilized, politicians such as Armando Antille, who had never shared Caballero's vision of a pro-labor democracy, were willing to make an alliance that they believed would enable them to carry Rosario in an upcoming election. And the northern Radicals linked to Antille were not the only politicians willing to join forces with Caballero; in Rosario itself, many politicians who had long opposed Caballerismo now joined the Yrigoyenistas. For example, Alcides Greca's Opposition Radicals enthusiastically embraced the new alliance a couple of months before the 1926 election, even though Greca had long opposed Caballero's political methods.⁷⁴ Similarly, several high-profile members of the PDP, including the provincial deputy and newspaper editor José Guillermo Bertotto, also defected to the Yrigoyenista party (see figure 1).

Predictably, the various factions within the new party assigned different meanings to the label "Yrigoyenista." For Caballero, affiliation with the former president meant support for the cause of oppressed workers. The Yrigoyenistas, he argued, "look for our followers not among the wise men, nor among the oppressors nor the philosophers, but rather among the oppressed and the poor."⁷⁵ In a 1926 campaign speech, Caballero associated Yrigoyen himself with the working class by recalling a recent incident in which the former president addressed a group of shop employees. According to Caballero, Yrigoyen was visibly moved by the workers' troubles and assured them that he supported laws that would provide for their well-being.⁷⁶ However, for politicians like Alcides Greca, Yrigoyenismo did not necessarily indicate a pro-labor political stance; for Greca, Yrigoyen simply represented the resurgence of "traditional Radicalism," a term he defined only vaguely.⁷⁷ Similarly, Alberto Mazza, a longtime Progressive Democrat who converted to Yrigoyenismo in 1928, described the Yrigoyenista party as the only one actively fighting against the old, conservative oligarchs who had taken over the Aldao administration. Mazza described the party as "in essence popular," but he did not suggest that it inclined preferentially toward the interests of the working class.⁷⁸ To a great extent, Mazza and the other Rosarino politicians who embraced Yrigoyenismo after 1925 were simply betting on what they hoped was a winning horse.

In Rosario, if not in Santa Fe province as a whole, this gamble paid off immediately. Although Aldao's Unified Radicals managed to hold on to most of the province in the provincial election of 1926, the Yrigoyenistas achieved an impressive victory in Rosario. There, the new party secured a plurality of 34 percent of the votes cast, soundly defeating the Progressive Democrats, who had controlled the department since 1920 (see table 5). Given the ideological heterogeneity of the Yrigoyenista party, its success cannot be ascribed to one particular voting block. Still, evidence suggests

that working-class voters were instrumental in determining the outcome of the 1926 election. In the ninth and tenth electoral districts, still predominantly working class, the Yrigoyenista victory was far more lopsided than it was in the department as a whole. There, the party won 43 percent of the total vote, compared to only 21 percent each for the PDP and the Unified Radicals. But if workers helped tilt the balance toward the Yrigoyenistas, the voting numbers indicate that they did not do so simply out of blind loyalty to Caballero. The Unified Radicals secured nearly the same percentage of the total vote in 1926, with Caballero in the opposition, as they had in 1924, when he had actively campaigned for them (see table 5). Caballero, it seems, was unable to sway working-class voters by his mere presence at campaign rallies. In 1924, he signed on to the Aldao ticket because he was out of other options, a position of weakness that limited his ability to shape the party's discourse. But by 1926, the situation had changed. With the program of the new Yrigoyenista party undefined and with its disparate factions all anxious to defeat the Aldao government, Caballero was the most outspoken party leader in Rosario. As a result, workers had good reason to believe that an Yrigoyenista victory would lead to a more labor-friendly government. The election results suggest that Caballero's nationalist, pro-labor rhetoric was still an effective means of attracting working-class votes.

The Yrigoyenistas' victory in Rosario in 1926 yielded few concrete results, since the pro-Aldao majority in the provincial legislature refused to seat the party's five new deputies. But the election did demonstrate how fruitful a political alliance with Caballero could still be. As the presidential campaign season neared and it became clear that the immensely popular Yrigoyen would run for reelection, politicians in Rosario continued to join the Yrigoyenista movement. But even as the party expanded to admit more elements of disparate ideological commitments, Caballero retained his position of influence. In October 1926, Caballero served as Rosario's delegate to the Yrigoyenistas' provincial committee, demonstrating that he remained the most powerful of the party's leaders in the city.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Caballerista rhetoric had proven itself to be so effective in the 1926 campaign that other Yrigoyenistas often borrowed from it, even as they downplayed its implicit class content. For example, José Guillermo Bertotto declared that his newspaper, *Democracia*, represented "poor [*humilde*] people," and depicted their oppression as "the history of Martín Fierro relived." Yet at the same time, Bertotto insisted that his constituency crossed class lines: "Peons or bourgeois, tramps [*lingheras*] or rentiers, everyone [turns to] *Democracia* as his only defender."⁸⁰

Table 5. Provincial Election Results in the
Department of Rosario, 1924 and 1926

	1924	1926
PDP	13,694 (42%)	9,463 (27%)
Unified Radicals	8,769 (27%)	9,039 (26%)
Opposition Radicals	6,688 (21%)	
Yrigoyenistas		11,895 (34%)
Total votes cast	32,315	34,818

Sources: *La Capital*, 4 February 1924, 4; 8 February 1926, 6.
Note: The totals do not add up because I have left out blank votes, votes for Socialists and Communists, and votes for candidates labeled “various.” For this same reason, the percentages do not add up to 100.

Bertotto’s willingness to employ Caballerista rhetoric was even more apparent in a *Democracia* article accusing the Aldao government of politically motivated violence in the countryside. Just over a week before the 1928 provincial election, the newspaper ran a front-page article about the murder of an Yrigoyenista leader named Rosario López by police in a small town in rural Santa Fe. The narrative structure, imagery, and language of the piece are unmistakably reminiscent of the tales of gaucho heroes that were so popular in Rosario. The article celebrates López’s bravery, referring to him as a “paisano,” the criollista term of endearment for a rural Argentine, and reporting that “the government men were afraid of Rosario López because threats and bullies did not scare him.” According to the article, three cowardly policemen, two of whom were from Rosario, opened fire on the unsuspecting López as he returned home on horseback. Through his ingenuity and skill with a knife, the brave Yrigoyenista was able to kill one policeman and wound the others before being shot in the back. As he fought, the newspaper reports, López shouted defiantly, “shoot well for you are facing a man, shoot for you are killing a brave man!” And this judgment was grudgingly seconded by one of the policemen, who on his deathbed acknowledged that López “fought well, conducting himself like a brave man.”⁸¹ In celebrating the brave, manly resistance of a rural Argentine attacked by cowardly policemen sent by the evil forces of the city, the *Democracia* article employed the generic conventions of criollista stories. Taking a page out of Caballero’s book, Bertotto’s newspaper used this very familiar story line in order to bolster the image of the Yrigoyenista party, while generating popular hostility toward Aldao’s government.

Bertotto was unwilling to take what for Caballero was always the next step—linking the struggle of oppressed paisanos like Rosario López directly to the plight of the urban working class. Nevertheless, try as they might to use the discourse of *criollismo* without invoking its class resonances, neither Bertotto nor any other politician could completely control the meanings attached to this language. Soon after the election of 1928, events would demonstrate that workers continued to read a pro-labor message into the language of *criollista* nationalism.

Among other factors, the widespread use of *criollista* rhetoric resulted in a resounding Yrigoyenista victory in the provincial election of 1928. The party improved dramatically on its 1926 showing, winning an outright majority in Rosario with 55 percent of the vote.⁸² Moreover, a strong performance throughout the province enabled the Yrigoyenistas to take control of the Santa Fe government. Although working-class voters were a crucial base of Yrigoyenista support, the party's dramatic victory depended on its ability to attract votes from other social sectors as well. Toward that end, the party's decision not to make Caballero a candidate, either for governor, vice governor, or provincial deputy, was probably a wise one. Many elite voters would undoubtedly have had a difficult time casting their ballots for a politician with such a well-known history as a rabble-rouser. Instead, the party chose Pedro Gómez Cello as its gubernatorial candidate. A physician from the city of Santa Fe, Gómez Cello had served as provincial deputy as well as mayor of his home city. He had a reputation for efficiency and honesty, and he had never been associated with any of the Radical factions linked to Caballero.⁸³ For vice governor, the Yrigoyenistas needed to select someone from Rosario in order to appease party loyalists from that part of the province. In Elías de la Puente, another doctor and former provincial deputy who served as president of the council of hygiene under the Aldao administration, they found a Rosarino who had not been linked to Caballero until he joined the Yrigoyenista party in 1926.⁸⁴ Although Caballero was extremely visible on the campaign trail, he was not included on the Yrigoyenista ticket, and his role in the new government remained uncertain.

The Yrigoyenista victory in Santa Fe was part of a nationwide movement, a dramatic outpouring of support for Hipólito Yrigoyen. Partly due to the impact of this larger movement and to the enormous popularity of Yrigoyen himself,⁸⁵ the 1928 provincial election generated unprecedented enthusiasm in Rosario, yielding a turnout of 80 percent, by far the highest in the city since democratic elections were first held in 1912.⁸⁶ In the national elections held just a couple of months later, Yrigoyen easily won reelection, garnering 57 percent of the national vote and 63 percent in Santa Fe province.⁸⁷ Rosarino workers were clearly enthusiastic not just about the

local Yrigoyenista party, but also about a new Yrigoyen presidency. But did workers' willingness to embrace politics in general and one politician in particular suggest a decline in their class consciousness? Certainly many anarchists saw it that way. As the Yrigoyenistas gained strength, Rosario's anarchist newspapers chastised workers for their gullibility:

The people are a piece of meat fought over by all the predatory dogs of politics, who, in order to hide their claws, disguise themselves with the most diverse names, all toward the same end: to domesticate [the people] in the blind and stupid ignorance of laws, which legalize the theft and robbery of everything they produce.⁸⁸

For labor activists frustrated by the fact that workers would apparently prefer to participate in politics than join anarchist unions, the popularity of the Yrigoyenista party represented nothing more than false consciousness. But given the prominence of Caballerista rhetoric during the 1928 campaign—rhetoric that either explicitly trumpeted the cause of oppressed workers or more subtly tapped into the latent suggestion of class struggle present in criollista discourse—workers need hardly have forsaken their class identity in order to become supporters of Yrigoyenismo. The same working-class identity reinforced in the tangos of the mid-1920s now gained political expression within the Yrigoyenista movement. As events would soon confirm, working-class identity in Rosario was as vital as it had ever been.

The Return of the Repressed: The Political Consequences of Class Conflict, 1928-1929

Between the Yrigoyenista victory in February and Gómez Cello's inauguration on 9 May, Rosarinos anticipated the establishment of the new provincial government either with eagerness or trepidation. Expectations varied across lines of social class and political ideology. Caballero looked forward to attaining a position of power and influence within the Gómez Cello administration and to putting into practice the class politics he had preached during the campaign. But other Yrigoyenistas were troubled by the potential consequences of their alliance with Caballero. A story told by Alcides Greca illustrates this sort of anxiety. In his campaign speeches, Greca defended the Yrigoyenistas against the charge that "we are the party of the mob [*la plebe*], that we are the rabble [*la chusma*]." He explained that the sailors who accompanied Christopher Columbus to the New World were lower class as well, but that in discovering America, that rabble was transformed into a glorious and heroic community. After one such

speech, a fellow Yrigoyenista approached Greca to congratulate him on the analogy, but also to raise a concern: "But don't you think our boat is too full?" he asked.⁸⁶ Bringing the masses on board had been the key to Yrigoyenista success, but to many party leaders it was also a dangerous undertaking. The massive strike wave of 1928–1929 would quickly confirm the worst fears of these nervous Yrigoyenistas: By mobilizing the masses, the new political movement enabled a dramatic reawakening within the labor movement.

In the months leading up to the inauguration, Rosarinos waited for Gómez Cello to indicate the direction his government would take. From the pages of *Democracia*, Bertotto explained that he and other longtime followers of PDP founder Lisandro de la Torre had supported the Yrigoyenista ticket because they believed it had the best chance to defeat the corrupt and oligarchic Unified Radicals. Now that the Yrigoyenistas had won, Bertotto promised that he would energetically monitor the new government's actions.⁸⁷ When Gómez Cello announced a detailed program of action in late April, Bertotto had reason to be pleased. The governor-elect pledged to "elevate economic, cultural [and] hygienic living conditions," but to do so in a way that avoided "electoralism." Instead of granting favors to the working class in exchange for votes, he would pursue what he called "the politics of the laboratory," taking a scientific approach to social reform. This language, so reminiscent of the discourse that accompanied Pandolfo's reformist labor bills through the legislature in 1926 and 1927, reassured politicians like Bertotto, who worried openly that the new administration might embrace Caballerista class politics.⁸⁸ Instead, Gómez Cello seemed committed to a progressive politics based on a scientific analysis of society's needs.

The statements of the new governor notwithstanding, Rosario's workers expected to receive preferential treatment from the new Yrigoyenista administration, and once the new government was installed, they immediately pressed their demands. During the campaign, Caballero had been a far more visible presence at the party's rallies in Rosario than Gómez Cello. Having listened to Caballero's stirring oratory and then having voted enthusiastically for the party he appeared to lead, workers now expected a pro-labor government. And they wasted no time trying to take advantage of the improved bargaining position they perceived. In early May, just a week before Gómez Cello's inauguration, Rosario's port workers went on strike, demanding higher pay. Faced with a well-organized company union filled with willing replacement workers, the strikers failed to attract much attention to their cause until 8 May. On that day, Luisa Lallana, a young woman who was handing out pamphlets in support of the strike, was murdered. While *La Capital* simply labeled the incident a tragedy, labor organizers and sympathetic observers such as Bertotto blamed the murder on the

Patriotic League, an organization known for its zealous strikebreaking techniques. Lallana's murder had an immediate, galvanizing effect on Rosario's working class. On 9 May, the very day of Gómez Cello's inauguration, Rosario's labor federation (the FOLR) convoked a twenty-four-hour general strike to protest the killing. Workers responded to this call in great numbers; the city was effectively shut down, and thousands marched through the streets as Lallana's body was brought to the cemetery. Expressing, as always, the perspective of the business community, *La Capital* condemned the general strike as the work of "elements of social disturbance" seeking to take advantage of the small port conflict. Particularly troubling to the newspaper were the many episodes of violence that erupted on 9 May, as angry strikers overturned tramway cars and fought pitched battles with the police.⁹²

The port strike of May 1928 initiated a prolonged labor mobilization in Rosario that would continue unabated until December, involving more than twenty different unions. Unlike previous episodes of labor unrest, this explosion of working-class protest caught Rosario's labor organizers completely by surprise. From 1923 on, the anarchist press had complained steadily of a decline in working-class consciousness. As late as February 1928, the Santa Fe-based, anarchist newspaper *Orientación* bemoaned the state of the labor movement in Rosario: "[U]nfortunately, Rosario is not an exception to the apathetic atmosphere, for the problem goes from one end of the country to the other."⁹³ When the port conflict erupted, the newspaper confessed that the "strike was a true surprise for everyone."⁹⁴ Thrilled to see workers once again willing to take to the streets, *Orientación* declared that the murder of Lallana awoke the "dormant enthusiasms" of Rosario's proletariat.⁹⁵ The surprise registered by *Orientación* suggests that the union leadership had little to do with the reawakening of working-class militancy that began with the general strike of 9 May. Rosario's unions had been undermined after the early 1920s, particularly at the port, where the Patriotic League and the Labor Association used anti-union hiring practices to cripple the workers' organizations. But suddenly, after four years had passed since the last effective general strike, workers embraced the cause once again. Lallana's murder obviously touched a nerve, but that alone cannot account for the strike wave that erupted. Not even the 1920 massacre of unarmed strikers in the Plaza San Martín had provoked such an immediate and forceful response.

In large part, Rosarino workers were responding to an opportunity created by political developments. Not coincidentally, they launched their protest precisely at the moment when Santa Fe's new government was being inaugurated. Caballero's rhetoric convinced them that they now had an ally in the provincial government, or at least that the repressive forces of the state were no longer at the disposal of employers.

Unlike previous strike waves, the 1928 labor unrest was not part of a national movement; for the most part, the strikes occurred only in Rosario and its immediate environs, where workers had been exposed to Caballerista campaign rhetoric. This rhetoric clearly resonated among workers who remained committed to a class-based identity. During the mid-1920s, working-class identity had been reinforced both by the new mass culture and by the dominant political discourse, which trumpeted class-based organization as a mechanism for creating moral, disciplined workers. Having retained their identity as a distinct social class with common interests, workers now rushed to take advantage of the opportunity created by the advent of an apparently pro-labor government. In so doing, they certainly went beyond anything Caballero had intended. During the 1928 campaign, Caballero had stopped well short of encouraging a massive labor mobilization. Yet his defense of working-class interests and his use of criollista nationalism continued to inspire workers in ways even he could not predict.

On 10 May, Gómez Cello rewarded Caballero for his efforts during the campaign by appointing him chief of police in Rosario. The forces that had traditionally been used to repress labor protest were now under the direct control of Rosario's most notorious defender of working-class interests. Even Caballero's Yrigoyenista allies seemed worried that he would use his new position to foment labor conflict. As Bertotto's *Democracia* put it, "One fears that Dr. Ricardo Caballero will be a demagogic police chief. Let him prefer the working people if he has to incline toward one class; but let him restrict his conduct to the fulfillment of the regular laws."⁹⁶ Just as Bertotto had borrowed Caballero's criollismo while trying to suppress its pro-labor connotations, he now attempted to pose as a friend to the working class while observing the prohibition against class politics. As the labor mobilization continued, this would prove a difficult position to maintain. Taking office on the day after a violent general strike, Caballero was immediately embroiled in labor issues. Although most of Rosario's unions returned to work the day after Lallana's funeral, activities at the port remained seriously disrupted. Exporters, anxious to ship the stores of grain produced by an abundant harvest, met with Caballero in order to demand that the police guarantee order on the docks. But the new police chief refused to give in to the employers' demand for a crackdown. Meanwhile, according to his own report, Caballero advised the workers to drop their demand for union recognition, since his own willingness to negotiate signified *de facto* recognition by the state.⁹⁷ Impressed with his commitment to their cause, the port workers requested that the police chief mediate the conflict, a proposal that was rejected by the shippers.⁹⁸

With negotiations deadlocked, Rosario's unions forced the issue. On 21 May,

they launched a forty-eight-hour general strike in solidarity with the port workers. The strike shut down the city's businesses, interrupted tramway and bus service, and halted garbage pick-up and street cleaning. Angry strikers gathered in large groups, vandalizing streetlights, tramway cars, and businesses. Faced with this disorder, the president of the Bolsa de Comercio asked Caballero to invite the strike leaders to a meeting in order to resolve the conflict. After two days of negotiation, the port workers won a significant pay raise and a guarantee that no reprisals would be taken against strikers.⁹⁹ The presence of Caballero as police chief undoubtedly helped the workers secure this result, by convincing employers that they would not be able to crush the strike with force. Having watched as the shippers were forced into making concessions, Rosario's business community now directed its ire at the police chief. On 28 May, less than three weeks after Caballero had taken office, the Federación Gremial de Comercio e Industrias publicly called for his dismissal.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, on the docks, the balance of power appeared to have reversed; the Bolsa de Comercio wrote Caballero to inform him that many stevedores who had served as replacement labor during the strike were now being effectively prevented from working by the union.¹⁰¹

The success of the port workers' strike encouraged other Rosario unions to take advantage of the favorable political climate. On 27 May, nearly five hundred workers at a bag factory walked off the job, seeking a pay raise. The workers achieved their demands in negotiations mediated by Caballero and returned to work on 6 June. Later in the month, strikes broke out at a textile factory and a pasta-making establishment. More significantly, 1,800 workers (1,500 men and 300 women) at the city's sugar refinery walked off the job on 18 June, protesting the firing of the union's secretary general. After intervention by both Caballero and Governor Gómez Cello, the union leader was rehired and the strike resolved on 5 July.¹⁰² Perhaps most disturbing to the Rosarino elite was a tramway strike that began in June and shut down the city's principal form of public transportation for nearly two months. The tramway workers were widely seen to have entrusted the leadership of their movement to Caballero. In previous tramway strikes, policemen had been assigned as guards, allowing scab labor to operate the cars without fear of attack from strikers. By refusing to perform this function, Caballero helped the workers shut down tramway service, thereby bolstering their leverage with the Belgian-owned company. Finally, after the Caballerista mayor threatened to take over the tramway system—a project backed, atypically, by the city council—the Belgian board of directors gave in, conceding a 13-percent salary increase, an eight-hour day, and a promise to rehire all strikers.¹⁰³ Still, this resolution hardly ended labor unrest in Rosario. Even as the

tramway conflict dragged on, nine separate strikes erupted during the month of July, including major conflicts at the electric and telephone companies as well as another port strike, this time in solidarity with workers at the nearby port of Constitución.¹⁰⁴

Throughout June and July, Rosario's labor organizers seemed to be struggling to catch up with the mobilized rank and file. Instead of following directives from the labor leadership, workers responded to the propitious atmosphere Caballero had created. With the police chief refusing to use force against strikers and instead pressuring employers to negotiate settlements, unions were able to win strikes. And with every victory, another group of workers became convinced that they too could secure pay raises or improvements in work conditions. While anarchists and syndicalist activists were enthusiastic about this impressive working-class mobilization, they also saw Caballero as a threat to their own ability to control the movement. Both the anarchist and syndicalist press attacked the police chief as a demagogue out to trick workers into voting for his party.¹⁰⁵ Worried that the strike wave was not advancing the anarchist agenda, *Orientación* argued that Rosario's workers were ideologically ignorant:

Even at the risk of going slower and losing something in numbers, we must expound without rest that the resistance society has not only an economic mission but also a social one, and that the point is not to present a set of demands and then after it is either won or lost, to return to one's life as before, because that would be worse than anything.¹⁰⁶

The newspaper hoped that by teaching workers to look beyond incremental economic demands, anarchists could wrest the leadership of the movement away from Caballero and use the strikes to further more advanced, long-term goals. But as the strikes continued, the newspaper grew pessimistic about the possibilities for transforming the movement: "[W]e are becoming less revolutionary every day. . . . [O]ur movement . . . is daily becoming practical, moderate, between conservative and cautious."¹⁰⁷

If the 1928 strike wave seemed overly tame to anarchists, in the minds of Rosario's businessmen it was nothing of the sort. Upset by repeated incidents of vandalism as well as by the apparent collusion of the police force in the ongoing strikes, the Federación Gremial de Comercio e Industrias launched a forty-eight-hour lockout on 12 July. Although the Bolsa de Comercio declined to participate in the movement, about four hundred of the city's most important exporters, wholesalers, retailers, and factory owners effectively paralyzed the city in order to protest the failure of the local authorities to guarantee the safety of those employees who wanted to work. *La Capital*, the

Federación Gremial, and the Bolsa de Comercio all argued that Rosario's businessmen were not asking the police to engage in strikebreaking, but merely to maintain order and to guarantee the individual's right to work with the same fervor that they guaranteed unions the right to strike.¹⁰⁸ Caballero, though, refused to give in, arguing that policemen must not "lend their assistance so that powerful enterprises can exploit their workers with hunger wages."¹⁰⁹ Caballero, labeled "Dr. Demagogue" by one pro-business paper,¹¹⁰ was now the principal enemy of Rosario's commercial elite.

While employers bristled at Caballero's pro-labor stance, Gómez Cello continued to support his police chief, defending Caballero's actions as evenhanded and free of political motivation.¹¹¹ Concerned that the Unified Radicals, who still enjoyed a majority in the provincial legislature, would take action against Caballero and other members of the administration, the governor prevented the legislature from meeting. Arguing that the majority of Santa Fe's deputies and senators had been elected by fraud, Gómez Cello ordered the police to shut down the legislature on 20 June. He then formally asked the national government to intervene, so that new elections might be held.¹¹² But after Yrigoyen's victory in the April election, the lame-duck Alvear administration was in no position to take sides. With the legislature closed for the foreseeable future, Santa Fe's opposition parties were unable to offer any resistance to Caballero's labor policies.

But if Caballero retained the backing of Gómez Cello and was under no immediate threat from the Unified Radicals or Progressive Democrats, he faced mounting opposition from within his own party. The Yrigoyenista party, from its inception a coalition of diverse political factions, now began to crumble under the weight of rising class conflict. During the May port strike, Caballero's tenuous allies had been willing to stand by the new chief of police. Bertotto, for example, had defended Caballero when the Federación Gremial called for his dismissal. He had argued that by criticizing the police department for its restraint during the conflict, the organization was suggesting that "the police should murder workers."¹¹³ However, as the strike wave continued, Bertotto began to feel uneasy about Caballero's handling of the conflicts. By early June, *Democracia* was criticizing Gómez Cello for giving the Caballeristas too much influence in official appointments, while marginalizing other Yrigoyenista sectors.¹¹⁴ Three weeks later, the newspaper began to attack Caballero's labor politics directly. While warning workers to beware of forging "suspicious associations" with the police, *Democracia* declared that "[t]he politics of Caballerismo produces social anarchy [*es de anarquizamiento social*]."¹¹⁵ The paper argued that the Rosario police chief was a poor imitation of Yrigoyen, whose government had benefited workers without creating disorder. Caballero, on the other hand, "encourages the explosion

of labor conflicts" in order to achieve "the capitalization of electoral elements."¹¹⁶ These attacks signaled the initiation of a familiar pattern. Just as they had in 1913 and 1919, politicians who had been willing to ally with Caballero during times of labor peace began to turn against him when this peace unraveled.

Within one month of Gómez Cello's inauguration, a group of distinguished Yrigoyenistas had already begun to register their disapproval at the direction the new administration was taking. In mid-July, the so-called "Núcleo" emerged as a full-blown opposition that aimed primarily to counteract Caballero's influence within the party.¹¹⁷ The group included well-known Rosario politicians such as Alcides Greca, Jorge Raúl Rodríguez, and José Benjamín Abalos. With Bertotto's *Democracia* as their principal forum, the members of the Núcleo attacked Caballero's labor policies, while trying to maintain their credentials as defenders of the people. As Greca put it,

I have never favored the violent repression of strikes . . . [but] what does not seem good to me is that Dr. Caballero, by means of certain agents, promotes strikes, acts as a professional agitator, and afterward crosses his arms without even proposing arbitration in order to secure an improvement for the workers. I believe in labor strikes, but not in political strikes, which some favor in order to get hold of some bit of electoral capital.¹¹⁸

At issue here was class politics. The members of the Núcleo opposed Caballero because they felt he was trying to mobilize workers in order to further his own political interests. And they worried that by engaging in these tactics he was encouraging violent social disorder.

As Greca's defensiveness indicated, the Núcleo recognized that competing with Caballero for workers' support posed a difficult challenge. For the most part, the new faction's rhetoric resurrected the old discourse of a politics of principle. Calling it an "auspicious vanguard," Bertotto applauded the Núcleo because "it is organized and formed by men anxious to convert Radical feeling into opinion, concept, cerebral substance. . . . [They] aspire to making the new government Radical through ideas, not through phrases." Like Progressive Democrats and Radicals before them, these Yrigoyenistas emphasized their commitment to ideas and intellectuality. But would they be able to convince workers that they were better off turning their backs on Caballero? In a speech at a Núcleo rally, Alberto Mazza addressed this concern:

It has been said . . . that the "núcleo" is too intellectual [*universitario*] to attract popular affection. Fools! They do not know that the working class has

the highest percentage of library readers in the country; they do not know that the people of this century are not the ignorant, miserable slaves of by-gone eras. . . . [T]hey do not know that they are no longer content with bread and circus[,] . . . that they ask [instead] for serene and convincing discussion with the capitalist in order to resolve their economic problems.¹¹⁹

With a logic reminiscent of earlier appeals to a politics of principle, Mazza optimistically predicted that workers were intelligent and educated enough to support a party of ideas. The Núcleo hoped that workers had too much “moral education” to fall for Caballero’s unethical appeals to their selfish interests.¹²⁰ The future of democracy, it seemed, once again depended on the citizenry’s ability to ignore its class interests and instead engage in a rational pursuit of the common good.

The first test of the Núcleo’s ability to attract popular support came in the municipal election scheduled for 11 November. After years of unsuccessful efforts, the provincial legislature had enacted a municipal electoral reform law during the same sessions that produced Pandolfo’s labor laws. The November election would be the second to conform to the rules of the new law, which gave the vote to all Argentine males as well as to foreigners and women who fulfilled certain tax-paying or educational requirements.¹²¹ Because they would no longer be closed to the poorer segments of society, municipal elections might actually serve as a measure of public opinion. Moreover, since the Núcleo presented its own list of candidates for the November race, the election might reveal whether the new faction had been able to cut into Caballero’s base of support in the working class. When the election was over and the votes counted, the Núcleo had managed a narrow victory over the Caballeristas, garnering 30 percent of the vote compared to the Caballeristas’ 28 percent.¹²² Even though both factions received the same number of seats on the city council, the result of the election was widely seen as a major defeat for Caballero, proof that, as the Núcleo had predicted, workers were too smart to fall for the police chief’s tricks.¹²³

A closer look at the November municipal election suggests a different interpretation. Given the intense labor unrest that had raged in Rosario since May and the unanimity with which the city’s mainstream press blamed these events on Caballero, his faction’s performance in the election was impressive. Major strikes by bus drivers and telephone company workers had continued throughout August, and several other unions walked off the job in September, including the sugar refinery workers and various construction worker organizations. A second strike at the electric company began on 8 September and lasted for two months. And while labor unrest seemed to be tailing off in early October, *La Capital* reported another upsurge on 20 October, just a few weeks before

the election.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, workers were no longer limiting their public demonstrations to job actions. In late August, for example, virtually all of Rosario's unions participated in a general strike—and an estimated five thousand workers showed up for a rally—to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti.¹²⁵ The sudden appearance of a mobilized and militant working class was blamed almost entirely on Caballero. While one newspaper bemoaned the “violent decline in moral values provoked by Caballerismo,”¹²⁶ another argued that Caballero's “aberrant demagoguery” had facilitated the “advance of the uncouth rabble [*la chusma inculta*].”¹²⁷ In this context, Caballero must have received very few votes from the business owners and employers who had traditionally voted in municipal elections and whose interests were most threatened by the ongoing strike wave.

Furthermore, several pieces of evidence indicate that Caballero actually retained a substantial working-class following in the November election. By way of comparison, the first postreform municipal election was held in April 1928, before the strike wave began and before the Yrigoyenista party split apart. In that election, the Yrigoyenistas defeated the PDP by only about one thousand votes, securing just 29 percent of the total.¹²⁸ Over six months later, after being blamed for a massive strike wave and after losing the majority of his political allies, Caballero still managed to win virtually the same proportion of the total vote. Moreover, despite the reform law, the municipal electorate remained a more elite group than the one that voted in provincial and national elections. Although all males who were registered to vote in provincial contests were automatically registered for the municipal election, more than 6,600 fewer voters turned out in November than had voted in February's provincial election.¹²⁹ Because educated or tax-paying women and foreigners were also allowed to vote in November, it is safe to assume that the proportion of working-class voters in the municipal election was significantly lower than it had been in February. And Caballero faced more competition for working-class votes in the municipal contest. The reform law provided for proportional representation in the city council, which gave even tiny parties an incentive to participate. As a result, nine parties ran candidates in the November election, including four explicitly working-class parties: the Socialists, Independent Socialists, Communists, and a union-based party called *Reacción Gremial*. Despite all this competition and despite the lower proportion of working-class voters in the municipal electorate, Caballero still managed a close, second-place finish.

This evidence suggests that even as elite voters turned against him, Caballero retained an impressive following among Rosario's workers. And although not conclusive, the breakdown of the municipal election results by district supports this reading. In the largely working-class neighborhoods of districts nine and ten, Caballero's party

drew the most votes, defeating the Núcleo by a margin of about two hundred. Meanwhile, in the more upper-class first district, the Caballeristas finished a distant third, receiving over seven hundred fewer votes than his former allies.¹³⁰ What the November election demonstrated, then, was not that Caballero's labor policies had failed to attract working-class support, but that Caballero had once again been successfully marginalized by Rosario's political and economic elite. No party could win an election—especially a municipal election—with working-class votes alone. For Caballero's political strategy to succeed, he needed to forge alliances with mainstream politicians who could appeal to other groups of voters. Like previous strike waves, the labor unrest of 1928 made any such alliance impossible. Terrorized by rampant class conflict, the wide majority of Rosario's politicians turned against Caballero just as they had before.

Labor unrest continued unabated after the municipal elections. A few days after the voting, the unions launched a three-day general strike, demanding the release of some imprisoned strikers and the rehiring of certain workers who had been fired. The strike shut down public transportation and paralyzed the city yet again,¹³¹ provoking a new round of protests by the city's business interests. Meanwhile, labor unrest was now spreading to the rural regions around Rosario, where cart drivers and agricultural wage laborers joined unions led by Syndicalist and Communist organizers. With no end to the strike wave in sight, the Federación Gremial de Comercio e Industrias asked the Yrigoyen administration to intervene in mid-November.¹³² Later in the month, the Bolsa de Comercio and Rosario's Sociedad Rural added their voices to this request. In their letter to the president, these organizations described the strike wave that had affected the city for so many months, claiming that many of the conflicts exceeded the bounds of legitimate working-class protest. Most seriously, they argued that

not only do the local authorities remove themselves from any conciliatory intervention in the solution of these conflicts, but they also stimulate the propagation of the strikes and by their passivity permit attacks on property, persons and institutions.¹³³

Rosario's businessmen pleaded for the national government to put an end to the labor unrest that they blamed on Caballero's rabble-rousing.

On 2 December 1928, President Yrigoyen sent federal troops to Rosario in order to reestablish labor peace. In his decree authorizing this measure, he attacked the "complacent passivity" of the Santa Fe government for allowing outside agitators

to operate in the countryside, creating “the imminent risk of losing the harvest.”¹³⁴ Although Caballero and Gómez Cello disputed reports that depicted a severe labor crisis in rural areas,¹³⁵ the perception of a significant threat to the grain harvest certainly helped convince Yrigoyen to intervene. Moreover, the outcome of the November municipal election had lowered the political costs of a federal intervention. By proving the existence of a significant political force that opposed the provincial government even as it remained loyal to Yrigoyen, the election demonstrated that the president could afford to undermine Gómez Cello. With the exception of the Socialists and, of course, the Caballeristas, all of Rosario’s major parties applauded the decision to send troops. Even the anti-Yrigoyen *La Capital* deemed the move necessary, despite its unconstitutionality.¹³⁶

Yrigoyen’s action undermined Caballero’s authority as police chief and gave new momentum to his political opponents. The president’s decree took the responsibility for dealing with labor conflict away from Caballero’s police force and gave it to the federal army. Moreover, in the wake of the army’s arrival, several more Yrigoyenistas defected from the Gómez Cello government, most notably Vice Governor Elías de la Puente.¹³⁷ Finally, on 11 December, Caballero submitted his resignation.¹³⁸ He presented the provincial executive with a lengthy report refuting the charges against him and attacking Rosario’s merchants and industrialists for their hostility to the legitimate demands of the working class. In familiar, criollista language, Caballero defended “the authentic workers of the republic” and insisted that the ultimate goal of democracy ought to be “the economic redemption of the masses.”¹³⁹ By attempting to implement these ideas as police chief, Caballero had helped spawn an intense and prolonged outburst of working-class militancy, while incurring the determined opposition of Rosario’s political establishment. After seven months, he had finally been forced out of office.

Labor strife did not suddenly end after Caballero’s resignation. Another tramway strike broke out on New Year’s Day, depriving the city of regular service for nearly the entire month of January. Workers at the city’s water company followed suit, walking off the job in February. However, the presence of the army and the active involvement of federal officials in labor disputes stripped Rosario’s workers of the special leverage they had enjoyed during Caballero’s tenure. During the tramway strike, for example, Yrigoyen and his delegates played an active role in negotiating a solution, pressuring the workers into accepting a provision that prevented them from striking in the future without first presenting their complaints to the national government.¹⁴⁰ In the countryside, the arrival of federal troops had a far more chilling effect on unionization efforts, although the sudden end of rural labor strife lends

some credence to Caballero's charge that the extent of the crisis in the agricultural sector had been exaggerated by his enemies.

The active intervention of the federal government and the military undermined the bargaining position of Rosario's unions, but it could not eradicate the militant attitude forged by workers during the previous year. In July 1929, a strike launched to protest the use of nonunion labor at the port developed into a full-scale general strike movement supported by almost all of the city's unions. Despite the efforts of the Yrigoyen administration and the Bolsa de Comercio to mediate the dispute, the port strike proved difficult to resolve. Among the most contentious issues was the workers' insistent refusal to load or unload any ship belonging to a company that employed nonunion workers. After an initial resolution of the conflict, workers held an enthusiastic rally in a downtown square; over three thousand gathered to celebrate what they saw as a clear victory for the unions.¹⁴¹ Still, as disagreements persisted between the unions and companies, the port and tramway workers remained on strike. By 21 August, after these conflicts had lasted nearly two months, the labor mobilization finally began to run out of steam. When most of the city's unions refused to participate in yet another general strike, the labor mobilization finally came to an end.¹⁴²

Throughout 1929, Rosario's business sectors continued to blame Caballerismo for sowing the seeds of labor unrest. In a report to the national minister of the interior, the Bolsa de Comercio pointed out that the frequent recurrence of labor conflicts was unique to Rosario; no other part of the country was experiencing comparable strike waves. The Bolsa blamed this unrest on Caballero's actions, which had empowered an extremist and dangerous labor leadership: "Only tolerance, excessive tolerance, dispensed to those who do not appreciate it, has been able to lead us to the anarchic regime that Rosario is experiencing."¹⁴³ In place of Caballerista class politics, most politicians and elite observers repeated the old argument that the state ought to address the problem of class conflict through modern labor legislation. In July 1929, Manuel Ordóñez, president of the Bolsa de Comercio, declared that what Argentina most urgently required was "[t]he sanction of a broad and harmonizing legislation, to make the struggles between workers and employers disappear."¹⁴⁴ *La Capitale* echoed this call, arguing that well-designed labor laws were all that was needed in order to solve the problem of violent class conflict once and for all.¹⁴⁵ But none of these observers explained how this panacea could actually be achieved. Social welfare proposals were not new in Argentina, or even in Santa Fe. Since the beginning of the democratic period in 1912, every governor, deputy, or party leader in the province was at least rhetorically committed to this type of

reform. Yet with the exception of the modest legislation passed in 1926 and 1927, the fear that politicians would seek to use these measures to build a working-class following had always prevented significant action.

Although the labor unrest of 1928-1929 convinced Rosarino politicians yet again of the urgent need for legislation to institutionalize relations between labor and capital, it also reawakened their fear of class politics. During the campaign for the municipal election of November 1929, the various parties that opposed Caballero defined the contest as a struggle to defeat the type of class politics associated with the former police chief:

Demagogic incitements with the exclusive purpose of electoral gain have compromised all the interests of the city, and today employers and workers suffer equally the consequences of the disorderly politics of the leaders of "Caballerismo."¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the Caballeristas continued to speak openly about empowering Rosario's poorer sectors: "[T]o create democracy it is necessary to practice it, teaching [*habituando*] our poor citizens to aspire to what our wise and open constitution gives them a right to."¹⁴⁷ In the voting, Caballero's party secured 27 percent of the vote, just one percentage point lower than its total the previous year. The Núcleo, however, did not fare as well, allowing the PDP to recapture its traditional dominance in municipal elections.¹⁴⁸

As the 1930 national election neared, many Rosario Yrigoyenistas reluctantly began to acknowledge the need to reunite the party. After all, if the municipal race was any indication, neither the Caballeristas nor the Núcleo had enough votes to defeat the PDP alone. Throughout January and February, these Yrigoyenistas cooperated with delegates from the party's national committee, seeking to forge a unified party in Santa Fe. As late as 16 February, just two weeks before the election, Caballeristas and members of the Núcleo were involved in negotiations aimed at producing a compromise list of candidates. Ultimately, however, this effort failed. While the Caballeristas insisted on being well represented on the party's slate, Núcleo leaders such as Alcides Greca refused to participate if Caballero's faction was included at all.¹⁴⁹ In the end, even the perceived danger of losing the upcoming election was not enough to convince Caballero's critics to ally with him.

In the aftermath of the failed attempts to reunite the Yrigoyenista party, Governor Gómez Cello and President Yrigoyen now definitively embraced the Núcleo, leaving Caballero even more isolated than he had been for the last two municipal contests.

With the backing of the president, the Núcleo was re-baptized as the Unión Cívica Radical-Comité Nacional (UCR-CN), replacing the Caballeristas as the Radical faction supported by the national party. As the remainder of the campaign played out, a delegate from the Yrigoyen administration, ostensibly in Santa Fe to re-open the provincial legislature, acted as a constant reminder of which faction enjoyed the support of the national government. After suffering their attacks for two years, Gómez Cello now embraced his former enemies and immediately began firing those Caballeristas who retained important positions. Within days, both the mayor and the police chief of Rosario lost their jobs, replaced by men more acceptable to the ex-Núcleo.¹⁵⁰ While Caballero's opponents used most of their campaign speeches to attack him, Caballero endeavored to maintain his working-class base even as he acknowledged that he could not win the upcoming election: "To the humble people, we tell you that we have not forgotten you, and that for maintaining the goal of redeeming you economically, we have fallen."¹⁵¹ The results of the election confirmed his prediction: Caballero finished a distant third with 9,644 votes in Rosario, or 16 percent of the total. Meanwhile, the PDP was able to take advantage of the Radical schism, easily winning Rosario with a plurality of 40 percent.¹⁵²

Between 1928 and 1930, Rosarino politicians had once again proven incapable of incorporating workers into democratic party politics. The Yrigoyenistas had built a massive working-class following by forging an alliance with Caballero. But this alliance became untenable as soon as workers, inspired by Caballerista rhetoric, mobilized to press their demands. The strikes of 1928 and 1929 demonstrated that the city's workers continued to see themselves as members of a distinct social class and to insist on actively defending their class interests. Given this tenacious working-class identity, politicians could see no means of incorporating them into the kind of democracy they envisioned for the country. By breaking with Caballero, Rosario's Radicals once again revealed their priorities: Preserving the social order and protecting elite hegemony were more important than winning votes. They dissolved the alliance even though without it they could no longer hope to win elections. The results of the 1930 campaign were not surprising: With Caballero holding on to a significant number of working-class votes, not even the endorsement of the president could secure a victory for the former members of the Núcleo. Not only had they lost working-class votes to Caballero, but they also remained tarnished by their earlier association with him. Upset by the massive strike wave, many elite Rosarinos turned their backs on all the Radical factions, allowing the Progressive Democratic Party, which just two years earlier had seemed nearly defunct, to recapture its electoral dominance in the city.

For Rosario's politicians, the project of transforming workers into citizens lay, once again, in ruins. Any attempt at involving workers in electoral politics seemed inevitably to exacerbate class conflict. Democracy seemed to create partisanship, which in turn produced demagoguery, class politics and, eventually, class warfare. For their part, Rosario workers saw themselves pushed out of the political mainstream again. The only major political faction that directly addressed their interests and promised to represent them in government had been systematically stripped of its power. After eighteen years of democratic politics, workers' insistence on class-based political identities remained fundamentally incompatible with the elite ideal of a nonpluralist democracy.

Conclusion

On 6 September 1930, Argentine army troops marched on the presidential palace in Buenos Aires, ousting the Yrigoyen administration and ending the nation's eighteen-year experiment with democracy. Historians have disagreed about the specific causes of the military coup, but several factors were clearly at work. By late 1930, the international economic crisis initiated by the U.S. stock market crash of October 1929 had begun to affect the Argentine economy and, in particular, the finances of the federal government. Meanwhile, a partisan stalemate in Congress and growing divisions within Yrigoyen's cabinet—perhaps exacerbated by the aging president's declining health—undermined the effectiveness of the two main branches of government. At the same time, the Yrigoyen administration made excessive use of the executive power of intervention, overthrowing those provincial governments controlled by opposition parties in order to expand its power and build a congressional majority. While the opportunities for effective opposition within the political system were thus shrinking, Argentine elites were angered by the government's use of patronage as well as its perceived failure to respond to the economic crisis. Elites who opposed the administration found willing allies among Argentine military officers disgruntled by Yrigoyen's use of political favoritism in promotions as well as his policy of reduced spending on arms purchases.¹

Still, the collapse of electoral democracy in 1930 was more than a momentary crisis caused by conjunctural factors; it was a major turning point in Argentine political history. Although elections would be held after the coup, the political system in place during the 1930s was characterized by systematic electoral fraud. Moreover, the 1930 coup was the first in a long series of military interventions in politics during the twentieth century. Argentina's democratic system failed to withstand the economic and political crisis of 1929–1930 because of certain fundamental weaknesses. These weaknesses would continue to plague the nation's efforts to consolidate a stable democracy for decades to come.

In Rosario, as in Buenos Aires and elsewhere, most elite observers welcomed the military action. *La Capital* had long opposed the Yrigoyen administration and now

insisted on the popular nature of the coup: “[T]he people who brought Señor Yrigoyen to power for the second time have now overthrown him.”² The paper referred to the coup as “the sentence of the people” and an action taken by “the popular masses,”³ even though only a small number of army troops had actually participated. Two decades earlier, the editors of *La Capital* had hoped that democracy would overcome class divisions in order to unify the Argentine people. In 1930, ironically, they claimed to find just this sort of popular unity in an explicitly antidemocratic act. Still, neither *La Capital* nor the Rosario political establishment wished to see Argentina governed by the military. While they applauded the army for bringing an end to Yrigoyenista and Caballerista demagoguery, most elites did not see the coup as a long-term solution to the nation’s political problems.

Nicolás Amuchástegui, a Rosarino lawyer and politician who had clashed several times with Caballero and his followers, summed up the hopes of many local politicians in the immediate aftermath of the coup. Amuchástegui praised the army, but insisted that the next steps toward fixing the government had to be taken through democratic channels:

The national democracy must seal in elections the chapter opened by arms. It must exhibit its civic capacity, its elective conscience, its moral example. It must think that the fatherland and its destinies are in the heart of each voter and especially in the soul of every Argentine. And feeling ourselves free citizens of a virile and great country, let us find inspiration in its History as we enter the voting booth, and before we pledge our conscience to a partisan creed, let us pledge our creeds to the happiness of the Nation. Let us vote as Argentines!⁴

Nearly twenty years after Argentina installed a democratic electoral system, politicians like Amuchástegui still believed that democracy required virtuous citizens who could identify and pursue the well-being of the nation. They could not imagine a successful democracy without patriotic citizens who could put the needs of the whole people ahead of their own private or sectoral interests. Unable to construct a democratic alternative to the nonpluralist ideal articulated by Alberdi, Sarmiento, and Sáenz Peña, those politicians who had yet to give up on democracy simply awaited the day that workers would awaken to a patriotic, civic consciousness, the day that they would come to think of themselves as Argentine citizens and not as members of the working class. Only when that happened would open competition between political parties produce harmony and preserve the social order, instead

of exacerbating divisions and provoking class conflict. But the experience of the previous eighteen years gave politicians little reason for optimism: Workers hardly seemed ready to embrace the de-classed citizenship identity created for them by self-interested elites.

Democratic Politics and the Making of the Argentine Working Class

By all accounts, the history of Argentina's working class took its most dramatic turn with the advent of Peronism during the 1943–1955 period. The government of Juan Domingo Perón placed the labor movement's concerns at the top of the nation's political agenda, organized and empowered the unions to an unprecedented extent, and gave workers a language of social justice that shaped Argentine politics for decades after the regime's downfall. The Argentine working class thereby gained its most influential political expression not through a socialist or communist political party, but within a multiclass, populist coalition linked to a corporatist state. As many historians have argued, Perón's success derived from his ability to speak to the specific attitudes, interests, and demands that workers had developed during the preceding decades. Whereas early interpretations of Peronism emphasized such factors as Argentina's late industrialization and the massive country-to-city migration of the 1930s, more recent scholarship has problematized these structural accounts of the origins of the movement. Over the last few decades, historians have rejected the notion that labor's decision to follow Perón reflected a deviation from some normative pattern of class formation caused by distortions in Argentine economic development. Instead, they have closely analyzed the events of the 1930s and 1940s in order to show how labor leaders and the rank and file responded rationally to a specific set of rapidly changing circumstances. As Jeremy Adelman has argued, this approach has illuminated many aspects of labor's involvement with Peronism, but it has also "reduced history to unstructured contingency, a sequence of disparate episodes."⁵ Labor historians have been wise to break with structural determinisms and essentialist models of class formation, but they are now in need of a new paradigm with which to interpret the long sweep of Argentine working-class history: In what ways was Peronism the product of the past?

This book's analysis of politics in Rosario suggests a possible solution to this puzzle. As the preceding chapters demonstrated, the advent of electoral democracy in 1912 had a transformative effect on preexisting discourses and identities. Decades later, these discursive transformations would themselves provide the building blocks for the construction of Peronism. By attending to these cycles of political identity

construction, historians can locate the origins of Peronism in a contingent, yet historical process.⁶ In the early decades of the twentieth century, Rosario workers avidly read criollista literature and celebrated the manly gauchos of the Argentine past. Working-class sons of immigrants identified with these legendary Argentine heroes and embraced criollo culture as a means of assimilating into the nation. At the same time, criollista stories explicitly praised the rebellious, anti-authority attitudes of the gauchos. By reading these stories, attending the criollo circuses, listening to payadores, and dressing up as gauchos during Carnival, Rosario workers performed and inhabited a masculine Argentine identity with counterhegemonic associations. But it was within the arena of electoral politics that this criollista discourse became linked to a defense of contemporary working-class interests. Many of the same workers who read gaucho stories also participated in Rosario's labor movement, and many more had been exposed to the anarchists' discourse of working-class solidarity. Ricardo Caballero, facing the need to win workers' votes in a newly reformed, competitive electoral system, devised a campaign rhetoric that interarticulated these two discourses. The result, Caballero's criollista nationalism, provided Rosario workers with a new, class-based, political identity by depicting them as the most authentic Argentines with the most privileged claim to citizenship.

The evolution of working-class identity in Rosario did not end with the advent of Caballerismo. Workers stretched the limits of Caballerista discourse by continuing to press their demands on the picket line. Because criollista nationalism articulated a class-based political identity, workers saw no contradiction between voting for Caballero's Radicals and participating in anarchist-led unions and strike movements. In order to retain workers' support, Caballero had to back the efforts of the labor movement at least rhetorically. He thus ran the risk that by mobilizing workers to support Caballerista candidates, he would also encourage them to strike. Rosario workers never fell completely under Caballero's charismatic sway. On the contrary, they proved quite rational and opportunistic, pursuing whichever alliances seemed most advantageous at any given moment. After 1919, for example, when the declining political fortunes of the Caballeristas caused them to retreat from their aggressively pro-labor stance, workers in many unions embraced anarchist labor leaders. In the last instance, they remained loyal not to any individual or political faction, but to their own evolving, class-based political identity. Even after the government repression of the early 1920s had forced workers to retreat from the union movement, this working-class identity persisted, dramatized and reinforced by the new mass culture of the 1920s. Just as criollista literature revealed both a desire to assimilate and an anti-authority or anti-elitist rebelliousness, the tango lyrics of this period betrayed a pronounced

desire for individual upward mobility even as they reinforced a sense of working-class solidarity. And this persistent class identity remained available for political mobilization. After the emergence of the Yrigoyenista party enabled Caballero's comeback, workers reasserted themselves at the ballot box. And just as before, Caballerista political mobilization revitalized the labor movement, leading to the massive strike wave of 1928–1929.

By the end of the democratic period, Rosario workers had developed a set of orientations and attitudes that would make them receptive to the specific appeals of Peronism. In 1930, workers retained a sense of themselves as members of a distinct social class, a notion reproduced in popular culture and reinforced in Caballero's political campaigns. Moreover, the political identity created by Caballerismo and modified by workers' persistent demands was premised on a version of Argentine nationalism that gave special weight to the role of the working class. Likewise, class deeply informed Rosario workers' vision of citizenship. In Caballerista discourse, working-class status not only gave one a privileged claim on Argentineness, but it also entitled one to the full benefits of membership in the political community. Crucially, these benefits went beyond the right to vote and the standard freedoms of liberal democracy. Throughout the democratic period, Caballero had preached that democracy must bring with it the economic emancipation of the masses. As a result, the notion that true citizenship entailed social and economic improvements and not merely political rights was well established. Finally, during these years workers had learned to look to the state to tilt the balance in their struggle against employers. From the actions of Caballerista Mayor Daniel Infante on behalf of the municipal workers in 1913 to Caballero's pro-labor interventions as chief of police during the 1928 strike wave, experience taught Rosario workers that a friendly government was the most valuable ally in the conflict between labor and capital. In the years after 1943, Juan Perón would appeal directly to all of these orientations; his notion of social citizenship, his message of dignity for the working class, his brand of populist nationalism, and his vision of a corporatist state within which workers, organized as a class, would find special protection all resonated with the attitudes Rosario workers had developed during the democratic period.⁷ It is, perhaps, not surprising that Rosario would be known in the 1950s as "the capital of Peronism."⁸

The experience of electoral democracy prepared Rosario workers for Peronism in another way as well. Even though it exerted a profound influence on working-class political identity, the promise of Caballerismo went largely unfulfilled during the democratic period. Partly because of workers' insistent and aggressive efforts to advance their class interests, the local political establishment refused to

countenance Caballero's "demagogic" political style. Fearing that his class politics would exacerbate conflict and threaten the social order, most politicians—both Radicals and Progressive Democrats—pulled away from Caballero whenever labor unrest occurred. As a result, Caballero was never able to remain in power long, and the improved leverage workers enjoyed from his presence in office always proved short-lived. The striking tramway workers of 1913 were defeated when Governor Menchaca broke with Caballero in order to satisfy Radical party leaders. Likewise, the labor unrest of 1917–1920 resulted in a massive repudiation of Caballerismo within the political establishment, leading to the election of Enrique Mosca as governor and stripping Rosario's unions of the support of the local authorities. The story repeated itself in 1928, when virtually the entire Rosario branch of the Yrigoyenista party broke with Caballero during the strike wave of that year. Yet again, workers who had been encouraged to mount their offensive by Caballero's political renaissance now found themselves vulnerable to repression. This repetitive cycle must have left workers with a deep feeling of frustration, a feeling that was easily directed against the mainstream political parties. As Caballero emphasized in his speeches, his failure to deliver on his promises was due to the virulent opposition of elite politicians. Foreshadowing Perón's tactics in the 1946 presidential campaign, Caballero's rhetoric quite plausibly cast his enemies as the enemies of the working class. By ignoring class interests, the dominant discourse of nonpluralist democracy had opened the door for Caballerismo to construct a new political identity for workers. By repeatedly preventing Caballero from realizing his vision, elite politicians made workers skeptical of the value of formal electoral democracy. As a result, workers left the democratic period with a deep suspicion of the mainstream parties, a suspicion that would be reinforced during the so-called "Infamous Decade" of the 1930s, when a fraudulent electoral system further eroded workers' faith in liberal democracy. Perón would capitalize on these suspicions and frustrations by calling for a "real democracy" that emphasized social benefits for workers and downplayed traditional democratic liberties and rights.

I have argued that democratic electoral politics in Rosario generated novel, working-class political identities that later provided the raw materials for Peronism. But of course Peronism did not emerge exclusively or even primarily in Rosario. Did workers in Buenos Aires and elsewhere undergo a similar process of identity formation? Undoubtedly, Rosario's political environment during the 1912–1930 period was unique. Although other provinces and cities saw progressive, pro-labor factions emerge within the local Radical party, Caballero was without parallel elsewhere in the country, both in terms of the nature of his appeal and the enormous success he enjoyed.⁹ In Buenos Aires in particular, no similar Radical faction appeared. In sharp contrast to

their Rosarino counterparts, many *porteño* workers voted for the Socialist Party, which, throughout the democratic period, represented the principal threat to Radical dominance in Buenos Aires. With the Socialists committed to a very different model than that of Caballero—one that emphasized working-class consciousness, pursued incremental improvement for workers through pro-labor legislation, and rejected criollismo and the other trappings of Argentine nationalism—workers in Buenos Aires did not have the same opportunities for political identity formation as those in Rosario. Moreover, the explosion of labor unrest that took place in Rosario in 1928 simply did not occur in Buenos Aires or anywhere else in Argentina.

Despite these differences, this book's analysis of working-class formation in Rosario does provide a valuable new perspective on the case of Buenos Aires. The popularity of Caballerismo in Rosario suggests that the potential for such a movement existed in the capital as well. The working classes of the two cities were both largely immigrant, both a heterogeneous mixture of workers with different skill levels and workplace environments, both organized at the turn of the century by anarchist union leaders, and both dominated in terms of bargaining power by railroad and port workers. Given these similarities, structural factors cannot account for the divergence in the form of their political participation. The absence of a Caballero figure in Buenos Aires probably had more to do with the existence of a vital Socialist Party before 1912 than it did with any differences in class structure. With the Socialists already appealing for working-class votes, there was far less space available for the sort of pro-labor appeal that was Caballero's specialty. Yrigoyen's pro-labor strike interventions of 1916–1917, as well as his *obrerismo*, a vague pro-worker sentiment manifested mainly in symbolic gestures, crowded out even more definitively any potential *porteño* version of Caballerismo. In the case of *porteño* workers, Yrigoyen's landslide reelection in 1928 is often taken as evidence of declining class consciousness. At a time when the city's labor movement remained relatively quiet, the willingness to embrace a political party with a multiclass following allegedly showed that workers had cast off the militant class consciousness of earlier years in favor of the unabashed pursuit of individual upward mobility.¹⁰ And yet there is evidence of a persistent working-class identity in Buenos Aires. During the presidential campaign of 1927–1928, Yrigoyen's supporters had appealed to workers' class interests, reminding them of the supposed benefits they had received during the Radical leader's first term.¹¹ And although no massive labor mobilization occurred in Buenos Aires after the 1928 election, the number of strikes did increase substantially.¹²

Moreover, *porteño* workers enjoyed much of the same popular culture as those in Rosario: In the early years of the century, they avidly read gaucho stories, and by

the 1920s, they were enthusiastic consumers of tango music. It seems likely, then, that even as they participated in fantasies of assimilation and easy upward mobility, they continued to see themselves as members of a distinct social class. Luis Alberto Romero and Leandro Gutiérrez have argued that the *barrio* culture of the 1920s and 1930s produced in Buenos Aires workers a simultaneous commitment to upward mobility and social justice, and that this complex orientation helps explain workers' enthusiasm for Peronism.¹³ My account of class formation in Rosario supports this thesis, but it also suggests that specifically class-based identities might have remained more prevalent than previously believed. Historians need to reexamine politics in the capital in order to determine how workers engaged with Yrigoyen's obrerismo and with the discourse of Socialism. Rosarino workers selectively inhabited identities that seemed contradictory, taking advantage of all the political resources open to them. Their porteño counterparts surely did the same, molding Radical, Socialist, anarchist, and syndicalist discourses to fit their own needs. Even though workers in Buenos Aires and Rosario experienced democratic politics in different ways and therefore combined and edited available discourses according to different patterns, the analysis of the previous chapters suggests that historians of the capital city need to refocus their inquiries on the construction of political identities within the electoral arena.

The democratic experiment of 1912–1930 did not produce the Peronist movement in any simple, direct way. In fact, in 1943–1944, when Colonel Perón began to build a following from his post as secretary of labor, he was addressing a new generation of workers. Built by import substitution industrialization and internal migration, this was a much larger, more urban working class than had ever existed before in Argentina. Many of these workers were too young to remember the competitive electoral democracy of the 1910s and 1920s. Nevertheless, the new workers—both recent migrants from the rural provinces and the children of the earlier generation of urban laborers—lived, worked, played, and joined unions with older workers. As a result, the discursive transformations of the democratic period exerted a powerful influence beyond those individuals who experienced them directly. New political identities had been created, the discursive repertoire available to workers had been expanded in specific directions, and a new set of class-based interests and demands had emerged. Scholars have long argued that Latin American working classes have been forged as much in the public plaza as in the factory.¹⁴ The case of Rosario suggests that electoral politics, in particular, played a crucial role in the making of the Argentine working class. Under pressure to win elections, politicians weaved old discourses into new political appeals, creating new possibilities for

working-class identification. Engaging with these new appeals, taking advantage of the opportunities created by electoral democracy, workers developed identities, attitudes, demands, and interests that would shape their political participation in subsequent decades.

Class, Citizenship, and the Failure of Democracy

As historical sociologist Waldo Ansaldi has noted, democracy and social justice have almost always appeared in modern Argentina as contradictory or mutually exclusive demands.¹⁵ As a result, the defense of liberal democratic rights and institutions has often coincided with antilabor positions, and workers have typically found themselves aligned with nondemocratic movements. Never was this paradox more apparent than in the 1946 presidential campaign, when Juan Perón's candidacy was opposed by an alliance of all the traditional, democratic political parties. But if the incompatibility between democracy and social justice constitutes a fundamental obstacle to democratization in Argentina, its origins certainly predate Peronism. The analysis of the preceding chapters locates the roots of this contradiction, and of the weakness of Argentine democracy more generally, in the 1912–1930 period. The electoral reform of 1912 immediately generated a deep conflict over how the newly enfranchised masses would be represented politically. Most elite politicians embraced a nonpluralist model of democracy that allowed no space for the representation of distinct sectoral interests. Frightened by massive immigration and rising class conflict, these elites saw democracy as a tool in a nation-building project that they hoped would protect and stabilize their class interests. In Rosario, this elite vision of democracy collided with workers' sense of themselves as a distinct social class. The contradiction between a persistent working-class identity and a vision of democratic politics that denied the legitimacy of class-based representation undermined Argentine democracy from its inception.

The nature of the elite democratic project was, to a great extent, the result of Argentina's distinctive political history. As Hilda Sabato has recently demonstrated, the introduction of electoral democracy followed a different pattern in Argentina than it did in Western Europe and the United States. In Argentina, suffrage was not gradually expanded from a privilege enjoyed by an elite minority to a right won by the masses. Argentine elites established universal male suffrage early on, writing it into the Constitution of 1853. Nevertheless, despite the absence of legal limitations on the right to vote, what emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century was not a political citizenry. Sabato demonstrates that elections in Buenos Aires during the 1860s and 1870s were contests between two elaborate electoral machines, each of

which mobilized a small army of voters in an occasionally violent struggle to control the electoral outcome. Voting during this period was not considered a privilege, nor was it the principal means by which people sought to exert influence on public authorities. One result of this history was that movements of popular resistance were never structured around demands for the expansion of citizenship rights: The discourse of citizenship was not available to subordinate groups as a means of advancing their interests.¹⁶ In 1912, Sábaro concludes, when elites designed and implemented the Sáenz Peña electoral reform law, the problem they faced “was not, therefore, how to *expand* the citizenry, but rather how to *create* one.”¹⁷ Confronted by a rapidly changing society and worried about the apparent illegitimacy of the political system, elites turned to electoral reform not in order to satisfy popular demands for inclusion, but rather to create and disseminate a citizenship identity that might bolster the cohesiveness of the nation and thereby preserve the social order.

What undermined this elite project was, in a sense, a problem of historical timing. By 1912, elites seeking to forge a classless citizenry faced a population that had already been well exposed to working-class identity and the discourse of working-class solidarity. The absence of a popular struggle for citizenship rights (or even a widespread desire to gain formal Argentine citizenship) had left the way clear for the spread of anarchism’s antipolitical, working-class militancy. Outside the realm of democratic politics, elites did not fail to notice this trend. Fears of working-class mobilization had motivated the electoral reform in the first place, and the press was filled with commentary premised on a recognition of class conflict. What elites perhaps did not recognize was that the prevalence of working-class identity represented a major obstacle to the democratic project. Workers who already tended to see themselves as a distinct social class were unlikely to embrace a nonpluralist model of democracy that did not allow for the representation of class interests. In fact, from the very beginning of the democratic period, workers in Rosario were excited not by parties who promised to treat them as responsible citizens, but by those renegade politicians—like Ricardo Caballero—who broke with orthodoxy by appealing directly to their interests as a class.

As Caballero’s success demonstrates, Rosarino workers did not reject democracy. On the contrary, they sought to transform the meaning of citizenship, taking advantage of the right to vote in order to press their own demands. What weakened the democratic experiment was the commitment of elites to a model of citizenship that workers proved unwilling to accept. Rosario’s Radicals and Progressive Democrats consistently rejected any political appeal that threatened to inject class interests into the arena of party politics or that legitimized a class-based notion of citizenship. For these politicians, winning an election was not worth jeopardizing the social order by mobilizing workers

as a class. Elite politicians branded Caballero a “demagogue” and labeled his political style “caudillismo,” condemning it by association with the bribery practiced by the rural political bosses of an earlier era. When the persistence of working-class identity was confirmed by the strike waves of 1917–1922 and 1928, many politicians grew disillusioned. To Rosarino politicians, these labor protests proved that workers could not be transformed into citizens, that they could not be taught to look beyond their class interests in order to pursue the good of the nation. Moreover, these politicians blamed the persistence of class conflict on troublemakers such as Caballero, who imbued ignorant, easily manipulated workers with class hatred and encouraged them to turn to violence and militancy. In this environment, democracy could not be made to serve elite purposes; it could not create de-classed Argentine citizens, and it could not legitimize and solidify the existing social order.

Ernesto Laclau has argued that the Radicals, under Yrigoyen’s leadership, achieved hegemony during the 1916–1930 period by fashioning a synthesis of elite liberalism and popular democratic aspirations.¹⁸ But at least in Rosario, this Radical hegemony was never as stable as he suggests. While the persistence of working-class identity prevented Rosario’s politicians from consolidating the nonpluralist democracy they envisioned, the resistance of elite politicians to Caballero’s class politics prevented him from securing a position of dominance. Throughout the democratic period, then, a fierce contest raged over the nature of democracy, citizenship, and even Argentine national identity. The period was characterized by the failure to develop a hegemonic synthesis, the inability of politicians to bridge the gap between working-class identity and elite notions of electoral democracy. Laclau and others argue convincingly that hegemony is built not through the eradication of discourses of popular resistance but through their incorporation into a dominant project.¹⁹ But in pursuing workers’ votes, Rosario’s elite politicians refused to appeal either to working-class identity or to the more ambiguous tradition of popular resistance represented by criollismo, and they shunned Caballero for tapping into these popular discourses. As a result, they failed to build a stable, hegemonic political system. The persistent success of Caballero’s renegade faction as well as a series of major labor mobilizations testified to this failure.

The military coup that ended Argentina’s democratic experiment in 1930 was triggered by such proximate causes as economic crisis and discontent in the military, but it was conditioned or enabled by deeper flaws in the nature of Argentine democracy, which doomed the experiment to failure even if they did not determine the precise course of events. In a still influential article written in the 1970s, Peter Smith argued that the breakdown of democracy in 1930 was fundamentally the result of a “legitimacy crisis.” Smith claimed that during the democratic period, conservative elites gradually

lost access to political power; under the Radical governments, a growing percentage of high political offices, especially in the national Congress, came to be held not by aristocratic elites, but by middle-class professional politicians. Even though the Radicals did nothing to threaten elite economic interests, Smith argued that the newly empowered middle-class politicians violated the established “rules of the game.” In particular, by refusing to share power with their conservative opponents and to rule through “gentlemen’s agreements,” the Radicals created a political system that lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the elite.²⁰ The evidence from Rosario suggests that although Smith was right to focus on elites’ disillusionment with a political system they had come to see as illegitimate, he nevertheless missed certain fundamental aspects of this legitimacy crisis. As I demonstrated in chapter 2, Rosario’s economic elite retained control of the local party apparatuses and of the municipal and provincial governments throughout the democratic period. But despite their ability to hold onto political power, these elites became disappointed with electoral democracy. In fact, Rosarino politicians repeatedly demonstrated that attaining political office was not their only goal; the wide majority of elite Radicals broke with Caballero in 1918–1920 and again in 1928 even though doing so weakened their own hold on political power. The refusal of some nonelite faction to share power cannot account for the delegitimation of democracy in Rosario.

Rosarino political elites turned against electoral democracy not because they were troubled by the class origins of their fellow politicians, but because they felt threatened by the manner in which certain politicians appealed to the voting masses. To use Smith’s terms, the Caballeristas had indeed violated the “rules of the game”: They had ignored the prohibition against class politics, and in so doing, they had undermined the project of transforming workers into citizens. Having conceived of democracy as a tool for unifying the nation and preserving the existing social order from the threat of class warfare, Rosarino elites were, by 1930, extremely disappointed. The events of 1928 seemed to confirm that democratic politics would always produce opportunistic politicians willing to fan the flames of class conflict in order to recruit working-class voters. Moreover, Rosarino workers, both by voting for the Caballeristas and by participating in strikes, had demonstrated their refusal to relinquish their class identity in order to be incorporated into a unified nation run by a privileged few. Faced with this tenacious working class, elites’ commitment to nation building and to preserving their own hegemony far outweighed their allegiance to the formal institutions of democracy. The comments of Nicolás Amuchástegui cited at the beginning of this chapter reveal these priorities quite clearly. Like other Rosarino elites, Amuchástegui supported the coup but hoped that democracy could be restored.

However, he insisted that for democracy to function, citizens needed to renounce partisanship and learn to “vote as Argentines.” In a society sharply divided along class lines, elites simply could not tolerate pluralism; they wanted a political system legitimized by democracy but untainted by working-class interests.

Like the attitudes of Rosarino workers, the fears and motives of the city's elites cannot be automatically ascribed to their counterparts in Buenos Aires or elsewhere in Argentina. For one thing, the high degree of overlap between economic and political elites in Rosario was probably unusual in Argentina. In other parts of the country, wealthy landowners may well have felt threatened by the rise of middle-class politicians as well as by President Yrigoyen's use of the federal budget.²¹ Likewise, given the absence in Buenos Aires of a strike wave comparable to the one that occurred in Rosario in 1928, porteño elites in 1930 had less immediate cause to fear class politics. Nevertheless, a great deal of evidence suggests that both the fear of working-class mobilization and the elite commitment to a nonpluralist politics were significant factors in the breakdown of democracy throughout Argentina. First of all, Rosarino elites did not invent their own notion of democracy; they derived it from the writings of such national figures as Alberdi, Sarmiento, Sáenz Peña, and González. Moreover, many elites in Buenos Aires clearly shared Rosarinos' fears about the consequences of enfranchising the masses. The antidemocratic arguments of Leopoldo Lugones and other well-known nationalist intellectuals were premised in large part on the belief that democracy bred demagoguery, which threatened in turn to lead Argentine workers to bolshevism.²² And these concerns were not merely the paranoid fantasies of a small, marginal group. Buenos Aires' most prestigious newspaper, the conservative *La Nación*, repeatedly attacked Yrigoyen as a demagogue.²³ After the 1928 election, many porteño elites were alarmed both by the labor unrest in Rosario and by the more modest increase in strikes in Buenos Aires.²⁴ While Yrigoyen was no Caballero, and events played out differently in Buenos Aires than they did in Rosario, there is good reason to believe that the fundamental contradiction between nonpluralist democracy and working-class identity was at work in the Argentine capital as well. If democracy and social justice have seemed incompatible in twentieth-century Argentina, it is in large part because elites throughout the country sought to build a democracy while keeping working-class interests and identities out of politics. And if the elite's commitment to democracy has often wavered, it is in large part because enfranchising the masses has always threatened to bring those interests and identities back in.

My analysis of the attempt to introduce electoral democracy in Rosario suggests the outlines of a new, nonessentialist approach to the historical study of democracy throughout the world. Unlike many previous studies, this book has avoided class

reductionism; it has not assumed that workers, the middle class, or elites naturally have a particular attitude toward democracy. On the contrary, I have interrogated the writings and speeches of politicians in order to determine how they understood democracy, and I have examined the behavior of workers in union halls, voting booths, and public plazas in order to analyze their responses to the elite project. This analysis has uncovered a complex “hegemonic process” through which workers contested and negotiated the meanings of democracy and citizenship. While elite politicians attempted to impose certain political identities on the working-class population, workers did not respond passively. Enfranchised workers selected among the various political identities on offer, generally choosing Caballero’s class-based, criollismo-inflected version of citizenship over the class-neutral notion of responsible, virtuous citizenship offered by most politicians. Moreover, by voting for Caballero even as they continued to press their workplace demands through unions and strikes, Rosarino workers pushed on the limits of Caballerista discourse. In the end, these efforts by workers to take advantage of the opportunities created by electoral reform proved too threatening for elites, who had only embraced democracy in the first place as a means of unifying the nation in order to legitimize a political system that favored them. By emphasizing the construction of identities within the political process, this analysis suggests that the success or failure of democratization is not predetermined by levels of economic development or by certain characteristics of social structure. On the contrary, the fate of electoral democracy is a contingent, historical result, which rests on the outcome of struggles, both material and discursive.

But this analysis has uncovered more than just contingent historical processes; it has produced generalizable conclusions that can illuminate cases of democratization in other parts of the world and in other historical eras. In particular, my analysis of the democratic experiment in Rosario yields one central hypothesis that might be tested in other contexts. The Rosarino case suggests that when electoral democracy and a discourse of citizenship are introduced after class-based identities have already gained a foothold among subordinate groups, the prospects for democratic consolidation are poor. In such cases, it would seem, elites see democracy and citizenship more as nation-building tools than as channels for the representation of diverse sectoral interests. Threatened by a self-conscious working class, they will reject any hint of class politics. At the same time, workers already committed to class will be less likely to accept a notion of politics that subordinates their class interests to some allegedly larger and nobler national interest. They will instead embrace articulations of citizenship and nationhood that complement and reinscribe working-class identity. For democratization to work, political actors need to accept a

pluralist system in which competing interests are negotiated within the political process. The contradiction between elites' desire for national unity and workers' insistence on defending their class interests stands in the way of such acceptance.

Recent Argentine history suggests that this contradiction can be overcome in the long run, but only at great cost. Argentina's transition to civilian government in 1983 did finally install a stable electoral democracy with effective party competition. And yet, President Carlos Menem's ability to consolidate this electoral regime in the 1990s required that elites come to see democracy as the most advantageous environment for their business interests. Achieving elite consent required in turn a neoliberal economic model and a "frontal attack on the trade unions as the main defensive organization of the working class."²⁵ In other words, the imposition of this democratic system has only been possible thanks to working-class demobilization, itself an enduring legacy of the brutal military dictatorship of 1976–1983. Now that deepening inequality and economic crisis have provoked a reawakening of social protest, one might wonder whether Argentine democracy will again fall victim to its internal contradictions.

Notes

Introduction

1. On the 1912 railroad strike, see María Alejandra Monserrat, "Aspectos sobre la evolución del movimiento obrero y el anarquismo en Rosario entre 1910 y 1916" (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas [CONICET], 1990, photocopy), 9–14; Heidi Goldberg, "Railroad Unionization in Argentina, 1912–1929: The Limitations of Working Class Alliance" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1979), 1–53.

2. A total of 4,824 men voted in the Department of Rosario in the provincial election of 1911. One year later, the turnout was 15,828. See *El Municipio*, 7 March 1911, and *La Capital*, 1 April 1911, 6.

3. *La Capital*, 26 February 1912, 6.

4. See, for example, *La Capital*, 5 February 1912, 6; 9 February 1912, 6; 25 February 1912, 6.

5. *Ibid.*, 6 February 1912, 6.

6. James W. McGuire, "Political Parties and Democracy in Argentina," in *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 200–246; Liliana de Riz, "Política y partidos: ejercicio de análisis comparado: Argentina, Chile, Brasil y Uruguay," *Desarrollo Económico* 25, no. 100 (1986): 659–82; Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 148.

7. On the absence of a strong conservative party capable of representing the interests of the elite landowners, see Edward L. Gibson, *Class and Conservative Parties: Argentina in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Torcuato S. Di Tella, "La búsqueda de la fórmula política argentina," *Desarrollo Económico* 11, no. 42–44 (1971–1972): 323; Oscar Cornblit, "La opción conservadora en la política argentina," *Desarrollo Económico* 14, no. 56 (1975): 638–39.

8. Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1973), 167–201.

9. For a clear statement of the position that identifies Perón's policies as the initial cause of political stalemate and instability, see Carlos H. Waisman, *Reversal of Development in Argentina: Postwar Counterrevolutionary Policies and Their Structural Consequences* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 117–27. The best analysis of Peronist working-class identity in the decades after 1955 is Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

10. McGuire, "Political Parties," 208.

11. Torcuato S. Di Tella, "El impacto inmigratorio sobre el sistema político argentino," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* 4, no. 12 (1989): 226-230. For another perspective, see Hilda Sabato and Ema Cibotti, "Inmigrantes y política: Un problema pendiente," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* 2, no. 4 (1986): 475-82.

12. David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), esp. 270-73. Also instrumental in establishing the connection between the UCR and the "middle sectors" was Ezequiel Gallo and Silvia Sigal, "La formación de los partidos políticos contemporáneos: La U.C.R. (1890-1916)," in *Argentina, sociedad de masas*, ed. Torcuato S. Di Tella et al. (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1965), 124-76. For a study of election results that also attributed a largely middle-class following to the UCR, see Richard J. Walter, "Elections in the City of Buenos Aires during the First Yrigoyen Administration: Social Class and Political Preferences," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (1978): 595-624.

13. Aníbal Viguera, "Participación electoral y prácticas políticas de los sectores populares en Buenos Aires, 1912-1922," *Entrepasados* 1, no. 1 (1991): 5-33; Juan Suriano, "Ideas y prácticas 'políticas' del anarquismo argentino," *Entrepasados* 5, no. 8 (1995): 21-50; Joel Horowitz, "Bosses and Clients: Municipal Employment in the Buenos Aires of the Radicals, 1916-1930," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 31, no. 3 (1999): 617-44. For an insightful study of the changing forms of citizenship in Santa Fe province following the Sáenz Peña Law, see Marta Bonaudo, "Entre la movilización y los partidos. Continuidades y rupturas en la crítica coyuntura santafesina de 1912," in *Los caminos de la democracia. Alternativas y prácticas políticas, 1900-1943*, ed. Julio César Melón Pirro and Elisa Pastoriza (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1996), 77-100. On the complex question of how social classes were represented by the parties, see Waldo Ansaldi, "¿Un caso de nomenclaturas equivocadas? Los partidos políticos después de la Ley Sáenz Peña, 1916-1930," in *Argentina en la paz de dos guerras 1914-1945*, ed. Waldo Ansaldi, Alfredo Pucciarelli, and José C. Villarruel (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1993), 31-37.

14. For this interpretation of the interwar period, see Leandro H. Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero, *Sectores populares, cultura y política: Buenos Aires en la entreguerra* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995).

15. Similarly, Jeremy Adelman criticizes the notion that a willingness to negotiate with the state made syndicalist labor leaders moderate. Adelman, "State and Labour in Argentina: The Portworkers of Buenos Aires, 1910-1921," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 1 (1993): 73-102.

16. See Daniel James, "Uncertain Legitimacy: The Social and Political Restraints Underlying the Emergence of Democracy in Argentina, 1890-1930," in *The Social Construction of Democracy, 1870-1990*, ed. George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 62-65.

17. Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966). Recent studies in this tradition include Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Andrews and Chapman, *The Social Construction of Democracy*. For an application of Moore's model to Latin America, see

Evelyn Huber and Frank Safford, ed., *Agrarian Structure and Political Power: Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995). In his contribution to this volume, Tulio Halperín Donghi argues that Moore's model does not fit the Argentine case, since the landed oligarchy there did not control the state to the extent often imagined. Still, Halperín does not object to Moore's methodology or theoretical framework. See 39–66.

18. Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and the Genesis of Classes," in *Language and Symbolic Power*, by Bourdieu, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 233–34.

19. See Ernesto Laclau, "The Hegemonic Form of the Political," in *Latin America, Economic Imperialism and the State: The Political Economy of the External Connection from Independence to the Present*, ed. Christopher Abel and Colin M. Lewis (London: Athlone Press, 1985), 70–74; Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, by Althusser (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 170–77.

20. Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, "Party Strategy, Class Organization, and Individual Voting," in *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, by Przeworski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 101. For an examination of how certain social divisions become politicized, while others do not, see David D. Laitin, "Hegemony and Religious Conflict: British Imperial Control and Political Cleavages in Yorubaland," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 285–316. Laitin demonstrates that by itself, "rational choice" cannot explain this phenomenon.

21. In her contribution to Huber and Safford's volume, Florencia Mallon makes a similar point by emphasizing the "autonomous role" played by politics and political cultures. Florencia E. Mallon, "Authoritarianism, Political Culture and the Formation of the State: Landowners, Agrarian Movements and the Making of National Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico and Peru," in *Agrarian Structure and Political Power: Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America* ed. Huber and Safford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 68–69. More generally, the importance of paying attention to the construction of political identity in historical interpretation is demonstrated in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

22. Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 21–23.

23. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989). See also Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 2–3.

24. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 129–40.

25. Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 43.

26. Patrice Higonnet, *Sister Republics: The Origins of French and American Republicanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), esp. 196–97, 216–52. Similarly, Pierre

Rosanvallon contrasts the French case to the English, arguing that the central political question in France since 1789 has been how to reconcile popular sovereignty with a tradition of rationalism that has no room for political representation on liberal lines. See Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

27. Higonnet, *Sister Republics*, 273-80.

28. Daniel García Delgado criticizes existing analyses of Argentine democracy for ignoring class conflict and the struggle for hegemony. García Delgado, *Raíces cuestionadas: la tradición popular y la democracia*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1989), 20.

29. Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 6-7.

30. Michael Johns, "The Making of an Urban Elite: The Case of Rosario, Argentina, 1880-1920," *Journal of Urban History* 20, no. 2 (1994): 167.

Chapter 1

1. Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 122-33.

2. Natalio R. Botana, *La tradición republicana: Alberdi, Sarmiento y las ideas políticas de su tiempo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1984), 299.

3. Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 141-42. In his earlier writings, Alberdi had defended Rosismo as the organic reflection of the Argentine national spirit, and Shumway argues that he returned to this view in his later work; see 122-25, 182-83. But even if *Bases* was not representative of Alberdi's work, it was hugely influential. Moreover, the notions of race developed in *Bases* are typical of the Generation of 1837.

4. For the notion of "cultural transplant, see Botana, *La tradición republicana*, 293-308. The passage from Alberdi is quoted on 306. Unless otherwise noted, the translation of all quotes is my own. On Alberdi's pro-immigration arguments, see also Tulio Halperín Donghi, "¿Para qué la inmigración?," in *El espejo de la historia: Problemas argentinas y perspectivas hispanoamericanas* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1987), 201-2.

5. Tulio Halperín Donghi, "Una nación para el desierto argentino," in *Proyecto y construcción de una nación (1846-1880)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel Historia, 1995), 28.

6. *Ibid.*, 28-34. For the comparison to Smith, see Botana, *La tradición republicana*, 309-10. Botana identifies a tension between Alberdi's Smith-like faith in the ability of the self-interested individual to forge a progressive civilization and his belief that such a civilization would require the importation of European customs, in the form of immigration. Does liberty create good customs, or vice versa?

7. Quoted in and translated by Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 150-51.

8. Quoted in Botana, *La tradición republicana*, 345. On the opposition to universal suffrage among the members of the Generation of 1837, see José Luis Romero, *A History of Argentine Political Thought* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1963), 137-38.

9. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Vintage, 1945), 207-9.

10. *Ibid.*, 212.

11. This comparison of Alberdi and de Tocqueville is drawn from Natalio R. Botana,

El orden conservador: La política argentina entre 1880 y 1916 (1977; reprint, Buenos Aires: Hyspamérica, 1985), 54–60.

12. Halperín Donghi, “Una nación,” 34–41; Botana, *La tradición republicana*, 318. On Sarmiento’s racial theories, see Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 139–41.

13. Sarmiento traveled to the United States in 1847, after first visiting Europe. On *Viajes por Europa, Africa y América*, the book which resulted from these journeys, see William H. Katra, “Rereading Viajes: Race, Identity, and National Destiny,” in *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, ed. Tulio Halperín Donghi, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 73–100.

14. Quoted in Botana, *La tradición republicana*, 320.

15. On this disagreement between Alberdi and Sarmiento, see Botana, *La tradición republicana*, 346–50. The citation from Sarmiento is quoted on 347.

16. On the educational incapacity of Indians and people of mixed blood, see Katra, “Rereading Viajes,” 76. On Sarmiento’s exclusion of these groups from political participation, see Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 151. In his last book, *Conflictos y armonías de las razas en América* (1883), Sarmiento adopts the scientific language of positivism, attributing Argentina’s poor political performance to its racial inferiority. See Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 109–17.

17. Halperín Donghi, “Una nación,” 36–37. On the tension in Sarmiento’s thought between the desire to create a literate citizenry free to participate in politics and the need for a strong, central government to limit that participation, see Natalio R. Botana, “Sarmiento and Political Order: Liberty, Power, and Virtue,” in *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, ed. Tulio Halperín Donghi, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), esp. 108–10.

18. Botana, *La tradición republicana*, 324–28, 348–49. The citation from Sarmiento is quoted on 349. Sarmiento posited an almost organic connection between the huge tracts of wild, uncultivated land in Argentina and the country’s backwardness, its predilection for *caudillismo*. This is especially true in *Facundo*. See Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 133–35.

19. Halperín Donghi, “Una nación,” 36.

20. This accusation was the centerpiece of Argentine “historical revisionism,” which first emerged in the 1930s in the work of Carlos Ibarguren, Rodolfo and Julio Irazusta, and Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz. These writers, and the many who followed them, attacked “liberals” such as Alberdi and Sarmiento for betraying the nation. See Diana Quattrocchi-Woisson, *Los males de la memoria: Historia y política en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1995), 99–219; Tulio Halperín Donghi, *El revisionismo histórico* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1971). While writing from outside the revisionist tradition, Shumway nonetheless makes similar criticisms of the Generation of 1837. See Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, esp. 156–67.

21. Jeremy Adelman’s analysis of Sarmiento and Alberdi reaches a similar conclusion. See Adelman, *Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 203–5, 213–15.

22. The best analysis of the political system installed in 1880 is: Botana, *El orden conservador*. See also Ezequiel Gallo and Roberto Cortés Conde, *La republica conservadora* (1972; reprint, Buenos Aires: Hyspamérica, 1986). The 20-percent figure is from 1910. See

Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1965), 225.

23. Botana, *El orden conservador*, 164–74; Gallo and Cortés Conde, *La república*, 85–89, 190–94. On the 1890 rebellion and the origins of the UCR, see also David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 41–47.

24. Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, 31–39. The quote is from 39.

25. My argument here is influenced by Kenneth Weisbrode, “Spiritual Nationalism and Politics in Argentina 1900–1912: A Critical Interpretation” (Occasional Papers Series No. 27, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1991). Weisbrode rejects the standard interpretation of turn-of-the-century writers such as Ricardo Rojas and Manuel Gálvez—the so-called spiritual nationalists—as precursors of the rightwing nationalism of the 1930s. He argues that these writers’ call for a national process of spiritual healing and unification directly influenced the politicians who designed the Sáenz Peña Law. The question of intellectual influence aside, I agree with Weisbrode’s depiction of the elite political reformers as profoundly concerned with issues of national identity.

26. On the combination of optimism and threats that characterized the Argentine mood on the eve of its centennial, see Botana, *El orden conservador*, 232–37.

27. David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 37–45; Weisbrode, “Spiritual Nationalism,” 20–26.

28. Hobart Spalding, “Education in Argentina, 1890–1914: The Limits of Oligarchical Reform,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3, no. 1 (summer 1972): 42. On nationalist education, see also Carlos Escudé, *El fracaso del proyecto argentino: Educación e ideología* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, 1990), esp. 25–61; Adriana Puiggrós, “La educación argentina desde la reforma Saavedra-Lamas hasta el fin de la década infame,” in *Escuela, Democracia y Orden* (1916–1943), vol. 3, ed. Adriana Puiggrós and Sandra Carli (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1992).

29. Escudé, *El fracaso*, 30.

30. On the Catholic workers’ circles, see Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 35–37; Eduardo A. Zimmermann, *Los liberales reformistas: La cuestión social en la Argentina, 1890–1916* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995), 52–55.

31. Zimmermann, *Los liberales*, esp. 35 and 68–70. See also Juan Suriano, “El Estado argentino frente a los trabajadores urbanos: Política social y represión (1880–1916),” *Anuario* (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario) 14 (1989–1990): 109–36. For the connections between social reform and electoral reform movements in this period, see Zimmermann, “Reforma política y reforma social: Tres propuestas de comienzos de siglo,” in *La Construcción de las democracias rioplatenses: Proyectos institucionales y prácticas políticas, 1900–1930*, ed. Fernando J. Devoto and Marcela P. Ferrari (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1994), 17–29.

32. Juan Fernando Segovia, *El pensamiento político y económico de Carlos Pellegrini* (Mendoza: Instituto Argentino de Estudios Constitucionales y Políticos, 1989), 154.

33. Roque Sáenz Peña, *Escritos y discursos*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Jacobo Peuser, 1915), 16. For a similar argument by Pellegrini, see Segovia, *El pensamiento político*, 71.

34. Joaquín V. González, *Jurisprudencia y política* (Buenos Aires: La Facultad, 1914), 167.

35. Botana, *El orden conservador*, 259. See also Darío Roldán, *Joaquín V. González, a propósito del pensamiento político-liberal (1880–1920)* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1993), 58.

36. Quoted in Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, 51. The translation is his.

37. Quoted in Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 62. The translation is his. See also Arturo Andrés Roig, *Los krausistas argentinos* (Puebla, Mexico: Cajica, 1969).

38. Yrigoyen discussed his views on electoral reform with Sáenz Peña on two occasions. Miguel Angel Cárcano, *Sáenz Peña: La revolución por los comicios* (Buenos Aires: Nuevo Cabildo, 1963), 167–70.

39. Sáenz Peña, *Escritos y discursos*, 104.

40. The original: “un gobierno de libertad, de discusión y de examen.” In Sáenz Peña, *Escritos y discursos*, 110. See also Zimmermann, *Los liberales*, 68–70.

41. Sáenz Peña, *Escritos y discursos*, 113.

42. *Ibid.*, 104. He also claimed that true proportional representation was prohibited by the Argentine constitution.

43. Botana, *El orden conservador*, 268–77.

44. Since the provision establishing the secret vote was rejected by Congress, the 1902 reform failed to eradicate electoral fraud. Nevertheless, the 1904 election did produce Argentina’s first Socialist member of Congress: Alfredo L. Palacios. See Richard J. Walter, *The Socialist Party of Argentina, 1890–1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 73–76, 90.

45. González, *Jurisprudencia*, 194. On González’s argument see Roldán, *Joaquín V. González*, 47–69; Botana, *El orden conservador*, 258–68.

46. González, *Jurisprudencia*, 182–83.

47. *Ibid.*, 173.

48. *Ibid.*, 193. In such early works as *La tradición nacional* (1888), González was directly concerned with the project of building a common national identity. See Goodrich, *Facundo*, 117–26.

49. Sáenz Peña, *Escritos y discursos*, 45.

50. Botana, *El orden conservador*, 269.

51. Roldán, *Joaquín V. González*, 67.

52. Manuel J. Menchaca, *Mensaje del Gobernador de la Provincia Dr. Manuel J. Menchaca a las Honorables Cámaras Legislativas al inaugurar sus sesiones ordinarias: Año 1912* (Santa Fe: Languasco, 1912), 3–4.

53. *Ibid.*, 4–5.

54. See, for example, *La Capital*, 6 February 1912.

55. *Monos y Monadas*, 5 March 1911.

56. Menchaca, *Mensaje 1912*, 5.

57. Menchaca’s support for independent political representatives echoes the views of Joaquín González, who was intent on making Congress a forum for discussion and debate. See González, *Jurisprudencia*, 189–90. On this issue, Menchaca and González seem to share Burke’s philosophy of the free mandate, as opposed to the more liberal view of representation espoused by Mill. See Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, “Introduction,” in *Representation*, ed. Pitkin (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), 20–21. As Pitkin suggests, this Burkean view is closely linked to an emphasis on the national interest as well as to the belief that public problems

have a correct, objectively determinable solution. Jürgen Habermas demonstrates that the free mandate disappeared as the bourgeois public sphere was transformed into the modern, liberal political system. See Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 204–5. For an examination of this same issue in Buenos Aires politics, see Aníbal Viguera, “Participación electoral y prácticas de los sectores populares en Buenos Aires, 1912–1922,” *Entrepasados* 1, no. 1 (1991): 16–17.

58. Menchaca, Mensaje 1912, 4.

59. José Guillermo Bertotto, *El Doctor Lisandro de la Torre: Concepto del líder* (Rosario: Comité “Dr. Lisandro de la Torre,” 1916), 5.

60. *La Capital*, 1 February 1912, 6.

61. Provincia de Santa Fe, Consejo General de Educación, *Memoria, 1912–1913* (Santa Fe: Salatín Hnos., 1913), 18. On education policy in Santa Fe province during this period, see Edgardo Ossanna, Adrián Ascolani, Mirta Moscatelli, and Alberto Pérez, “Una aproximación a la educación santafesina de 1885 a 1945,” in *La educación en las provincias y territorios nacionales (1885–1945)*, vol. 4, ed. Edgardo Ossanna (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1993), 445–90.

62. Provincia de Santa Fe, Consejo General de Educación, *Memoria, 1912–1913*, 10–11.

63. Isaac Francioni, *Función social de la escuela en la hora presente: Rectificaciones a su orientación actual* (Santa Fe: La Palabra, 1915), 5.

64. *Ibid.*, 16.

65. Although he was from the nearby town of San Javier, Greca was active in Rosario politics and occasionally wrote articles in the city’s newspapers.

66. Alcides Greca, “El nuevo patriotismo,” in *Laureles del pantano* (Buenos Aires: La Baskonia, 1915), 71–72. See also Francioni, *Función social*, 14–15.

67. Greca, “El nuevo patriotismo,” 70.

68. *Ibid.*, 73.

69. Michael Johns, “The Making of an Urban Elite: The Case of Rosario, Argentina, 1880–1920,” *Journal of Urban History* 20, no. 2 (February 1994): 166–72.

70. See, for example, Vicente Blasco Ibañez, *Argentina y sus grandezas* (Madrid: Española Americana, 1910), 569.

71. Francisco Scardin, *La Argentina y el trabajo* (Buenos Aires: Jacobo Peuser, 1906), 189.

72. See, for example, Menchaca’s celebration of the “people famous for their persistence in work” in Manuel J. Menchaca, *Mensaje del Gobernador de Santa Fe: Año 1914*, 3.

73. *Voz del Comercio*, 21 March 1929.

74. *Patria: Revista del Año 1925* 1 (July 1926), 128.

75. *La Capital*, 13 February 1912, 6. For another description of the 1909 strike that uses similarly gendered language, see *Monos y Monadas*, 12 February 1911.

76. *La Capital*, 4 April 1913, 6.

77. *Ibid.*, 13 February 1912, 6.

78. *Ibid.*, 10 March 1912, 6.

79. *Ibid.*, 3 January 1920, 4.

80. *Ibid.*, 9 January 1916, 6.

81. Ibid.
82. Alcides Greca, *Lepra (Panfleto de combate)* (Santa Fe: Dávila y Hnos., 1912), 8–9, 21–23.
83. Ibid., 21–22.
84. *La Capital*, 7 February 1912, 6.
85. Lisandro de la Torre, letter to Severo A. Gómez, 11 July 1910, in *La cuestión del día: La Liga del Sur y el gobierno de la provincia* (Santa Fe: Salatín Hnos., 1910), 5–9. The quotes are from p. 6. (This collection of letters, speeches, and other documents was likely compiled by the Liga del Sur.)
86. Enrique Thedy, “Indole y propósitos de la Liga del Sur,” *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 1 (1910): 76–77.
87. *La Capital*, 22 March 1912, 6.
88. De la Torre, letter to Gómez, 20 July 1910, in *La cuestión*, 32.
89. *La Capital*, 29 June 1914, 6.
90. Raul Villarroel, “Santa Fe,” *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 7 (1913–1914): 746.
91. Menchaca, *Mensaje del Gobernador de Santa Fe Dr. Manuel J. Menchaca: Año 1916* (Santa Fe: Salatín Hnos., 1916), 3.
92. De la Torre, letter of 11 July 1910, 6.
93. Bertotto, *Doctor Lisandro de la Torre*, 4.
94. Jeremy Adelman, “Socialism and Democracy in Argentina in the Age of the Second International,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 2 (1992): 211–38, esp. 237.

Chapter 2

1. Ezequiel Gallo, *La pampa gringa: La colonización agrícola en Santa Fe (1870–1895)* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1984), 211–12.
2. Ibid., 287–88. On Italian immigration to Rosario, see Ada Lattuca and Alicia Moreno de Angelino, *La inmigración italiana en el litoral: El caso de Santa Fe* (Mexico: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1989), 45–67; Carina Silberstein, “Inmigración y selección matrimonial: El caso de los italianos en Rosario, (1870–1910),” *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* 6, no. 18 (1991): 161–90. On elite Spanish immigrants in Rosario, see Oscar R. Videla and Adriana S. Pons, “Inmigración española y conformación de una burguesía local: Rosario de mediados del siglo XIX a principios del XX” (paper presented at I Encuentro Iberoamericano de Estudiantes y Jovenes Investigadores de Historia de América, Madrid, November 1993).
3. *Tercer censo municipal del Rosario de Santa Fe* (Rosario: La República, 1910), 29. The 1910 census listed the city’s total population at 192,278. Of the total, 97,895 were listed as Argentine, while 85,883 were foreign. For an additional 8,500, the census takers gathered no information on nationality.
4. *Cuarto censo municipal del Rosario de Santa Fe* (Rosario, 1926), 29.
5. Michael Johns, “The Urbanisation of a Secondary City: The Case of Rosario, Argentina, 1870–1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23 (1991): 499–500. On the labor movement in Rosario as well as other aspects of the city’s social structure, see Adrián Ascolani, ed., *Historia del Sur Santafesino: La sociedad transformada (1850–1930)* (Rosario: Platino, 1993), 73–198.

6. Johns, "Urbanisation," 501. See also Ofelia Pianetto, "Formación de clase y acción sindical de los trabajadores urbanos en una estructura agro-exportadora, Rosario, 1890–1910" (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales [CLACSO], 1979, photocopy), 33. On the salience and dynamics of seasonal labor migration elsewhere in Argentina, see Jeremy Adelman, *Frontier Development: Land, Labour, and Capital on the Wheatlands of Argentina and Canada, 1890–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 116–30; Ofelia Pianetto, "Mercado de trabajo y acción sindical en la Argentina, 1890–1922," *Desarrollo Económico* 24, no. 94 (1984): 297–307.

7. Jeremy Adelman, "The Political Economy of Labour in Argentina, 1870–1930," in *Essays in Argentine Labour History, 1870–1930*, ed. Adelman (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan and St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1992), 6–9.

8. Leandro H. Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero, *Sectores populares, cultura y política: Buenos Aires en la entreguerra* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995), 10.

9. Ricardo Falcón argues that because they lacked political rights and resisted the aggressive Argentinization efforts of the state, immigrants were particularly receptive to the appeals of anarchists, who opposed the state and accepted the persistence of ethnic identities. See Falcón, "Izquierdas, régimen político, cuestión étnica y cuestión social en Argentina 1890–1912," *Anuario* (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario) 12 (1987): 378–87. Similarly, for Luis Alberto Romero, the decline of anarchism and of working-class consciousness followed directly on the coming-of-age of a generation of Argentine born workers who felt far more integrated into the larger society. See Gutiérrez and Romero, *Sectores populares*, 46–49, 111–13. Jeremy Adelman refers to the "massification" produced by immigration to Argentina, which, unlike the United States, did not receive distinct waves of immigrants differentiated by skill level and country of origin. Since they came en masse from Italy and Spain, they were more likely to develop class-based solidarities. See Adelman, "Political Economy," 4–6.

10. Michael Johns, "The Making of an Urban Elite: The Case of Rosario, Argentina, 1880–1920," *Journal of Urban History* 20, no. 2 (1994): 167. For the contrasting case of Buenos Aires, see Michael Johns, "The Antinomies of Ruling Class Culture: The Buenos Aires Elite, 1880–1910," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 6, no. 1 (1993): 74–101. See also Jorge F. Sabato, *La clase dominante en la Argentina moderna: Formación y características* (Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 1991).

11. *Tercer censo municipal* (1910), 104.

12. The 1910 census (*Tercer censo municipal*, 174) listed fourteen ethnic mutual aid societies in Rosario, three of which ran private schools. Similar organizations in Buenos Aires have been the object of a great many historical studies. Using quantitative data, these studies have provided a clear sense of what Fernando Devoto has called the "multiclass ethnic universe" of the mutual aid societies, but they have only begun to address the question of whether ethnic organizations fomented or blocked the consolidation of a working-class identity. See Fernando J. Devoto, "La experiencia mutualista italiana en la Argentina: Un balance," in *Asociacionismo, trabajo e identidad étnica: Los italianos en América Latina en una perspectiva comparada*, ed. Fernando J. Devoto and Eduardo J. Míguez (Buenos Aires: CEMLA-CSER-IEHS, 1992), 169–85. On the complex relationship between ethnic and working-class identity in general, see the other essays in this volume.

On Italian mutualist organizations and schools in Rosario, see Carina F. de Silberstein, “Mutualismo y educación en Rosario: Las escuelas de la Unione e Benevolenza y de la Sociedad Garibaldi (1874–1911),” *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* 1, no. 1 (December 1985): 77–97.

13. On Refinería and Talleres, see Agustina Prieto, “Condiciones de vida en el barrio Refinería de Rosario: La vivienda de los trabajadores (1890–1914),” *Anuario* (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario) 14 (1989–1990): 165–81; Agustina Prieto, “Ciudad y barrio obrero: Un análisis comparado de la vida cotidiana de los trabajadores de Rosario” (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas [CONICET], n.d., photocopy); Jorge E. Hardoy, “La vivienda obrera en una ciudad en expansión: Rosario entre 1858 y 1910,” in *Cultura urbana latinoamericana*, ed. Jorge Enrique Hardoy and Richard Morse (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales [CLACSO], 1985), 63–93; Lance Query, “Private Interests and Public Welfare: Rails, Sewers and Open Spaces in Urban Rosario, Argentina (1865–1914)” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1981). The population numbers are from *Tercer censo municipal* (1910), 56.

14. *Monos y Monadas*, 19 February 1911.

15. For example, a 1908 article in *La Verdad* described Refinería as “our most abandoned neighborhood, our focal point of crime, the part of our city which gives rise to dark tales (*la crónica oscura*).” Cited in Ricardo Falcón, “Elites urbanas, rol del estado y cuestión obrera (Rosario, 1900–1912),” *Estudios Sociales* 3 (1992): 99.

16. For many wealthy industrialists and merchants, conventillo ownership represented a lucrative investment. See Hardoy, “La vivienda obrera,” 81.

17. More work remains to be done on the emerging, suburban neighborhoods in which some workers were able to purchase homes. See chapter 6.

18. On the early labor movement in Rosario, see María Alejandra Monserrat, “Orígenes y consolidación del anarquismo en Rosario 1888–1910” (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas [CONICET], 1989, photocopy); Pianetto, “Formación de clase”; Plácido Grela, “El movimiento obrero en Rosario,” *Todo Es Historia* 49 (May 1971): 54–73; Diego Armus, ed., *Huelgas, habitat y salud en el Rosario del novecientos* (Rosario: Universidad Nacional de Rosario, 1995).

19. On the Socialist Party’s gradual marginalization within the Argentine labor movement, see Richard J. Walter, *The Socialist Party of Argentina, 1890–1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 52–56. In 1912, the Socialist leader Enrique Dickman reported that the party had long struggled to maintain a working-class following in Rosario, which he labeled “the bastion of the anarchists.” See *La Vanguardia*, 21 March 1912, 1.

20. The argument that anarchism’s success among Argentine workers owed less to ideology than it did to practical, economic trade unionism was most forcefully put forward by Ruth Thompson, “The Limitations of Ideology in the Early Argentine Labour Movement: Anarchism in the Trade Unions, 1890–1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16, no. 1 (1984): 81–99. Roberto Korzeniewicz provides further evidence for this position, arguing that anarchists and other labor activists were always willing to accept state mediation in the name of pragmatism. See Roberto P. Korzeniewicz, “The Labour Movement and the State in Argentina, 1887–1907,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 8, no. 1 (1989): 25–45. Rosario’s anarchists may have been even more committed to practical unionism than

anarchists elsewhere in Argentina. This pragmatic orientation would help explain why the syndicalists did not take over control of the city's labor movement after 1915 as they did in Buenos Aires. On syndicalist ideology, see Jeremy Adelman, "State and Labour in Argentina: The Portworkers of Buenos Aires, 1910–1921," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25, no. 1 (1993): 73–102; Maricel Bertolo, "El sindicalismo revolucionario en una etapa de transición (1910–1916)," *Estudios Sociales* 4 (January–June 1993): 137–60.

21. María Alejandra Monserrat, "Aspectos sobre la evolución del movimiento obrero y el anarquismo en Rosario entre 1910 y 1916" (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas [CONICET], 1990, photocopy), 4–5.

22. On the unemployment of 1907–1912 and on the rise of the "neoindividualists," see Monserrat, "Aspectos sobre la evolución del movimiento obrero," 6–8.

23. *Provincia de Santa Fe, Anuario de la Dirección General de Estadística de la Provincia de Santa Fe: Correspondiente al año 1912* (Rosario: Scagnolari, 1913), 435–37.

24. Falcón, "Elites urbanas," 87–106.

25. Juan Biale Massé, *El estado de las clases obreras argentinas a comienzos del siglo* (1904; reprint, Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1968). A brief biographical sketch of Biale Massé can be found in: Diego Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia Argentina*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Ediar, 1956), 494. Biale Massé was not the only voice in Rosario urging elites to confront the "social question;" the Catholic reformers of the Argentine Social League were active in the city as well. See María Pía Martín, "La acción social católica en Rosario (1907–1912)," in *Historia del Sur Santafesino*, ed. Adrián Ascolani, 177–98.

26. See Juan Biale Massé, *Informe pasado a la Sociedad Obreros Estivadores y de Rivera del Puerto del Rosario* (Rosario: La Provincia, 1903); Roberto Marrone, *Apuntes para la historia de un gremio (Empleados de Comercio de Rosario)* (Rosario: Llordén, 1974), 45–49.

27. Adriana S. Pons and Oscar R. Videla, "Una corporación frente a la cuestión social: La Bolsa de Comercio de Rosario ante los conflictos obreros a principios del siglo XX," *Anuario (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario)* 15 (1991–1992): 127–39.

28. Darío Cantón, *El parlamento argentino en épocas de cambio: 1890, 1916 y 1946* (Buenos Aires: Editorial del Instituto, 1966); Peter H. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among Political Elites 1904–1955* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974); Karen L. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Political Recruitment and Public Policy, 1890–1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 112–35.

29. Peter H. Smith, "The Breakdown of Democracy in Argentina, 1916–30," in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 3–27.

30. On the impact of the democratic transition on Santa Fe politics, see Marta Bonaudo, "Entre la movilización y los partidos: Continuidades y rupturas en la crítica coyuntura santafesina de 1912," in *Los caminos de la democracia: Alternativas y prácticas políticas, 1900–1943*, ed. Julio César Melón Pirro and Elisa Pastoriza (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1996), 77–100. On the participants in Santa Fe politics during the previous period, see Marta Bonaudo and Elida Sonzogni, "Redes parentales, facciones y nombres nuevos en la construcción del espacio público santafesino (2a mitad del siglo XIX)" (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas [CONICET], n.d., photocopy);

Alicia Megías, “Los modos de hacer política en Santa Fe en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX: Rosario, escenario y protagonistas,” *Estudios Sociales* 3 (1992): 107–30.

31. Johns, “Making of an Urban Elite,” 161.

32. Because national congressmen were elected as representatives of provinces, not cities, the identification of Rosarinos here is a bit subjective. For example, I have included some deputies who earlier represented other parts of Santa Fe province in the provincial legislature. In general, anyone active in Rosario’s political committees was included.

33. Remmer, *Party Competition*, 122.

34. I have discovered elite club membership before the beginning of the legislative term for twenty-one of the national deputies, or 64 percent of the total, and twenty, or 49 percent of those in the provincial legislature. More complete data on club membership would likely have yielded higher percentages.

35. *Siglo XX: Argentina Biográfica, Rosario de Santa Fe* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Americana, 1915), 16–17.

36. Santa Fe, Cámara de Senadores, *Diario de Sesiones* (1926), 118.

37. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy*, 28–31.

38. The sources for these findings are the same as those listed for table 1.

39. On the Liga del Sur, see Carlos Malamud Rikles, *Partidos políticos y elecciones en la Argentina: la Liga del Sur (1908–1916)* (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1997); Bonaudo, “Entre la movilización,” 81–86.

40. The chief of police was referred to as “jefe político” until 1923, when the title was changed to the more direct “jefe de policía.”

41. Oscar Luis Ensinck, “El régimen municipal en la provincia de Santa Fe,” in *Historia de las instituciones de la provincia de Santa Fe*, vol. 3 (Santa Fe: Imprenta Oficial de la Provincia, 1970), 147–48.

42. Marcela Ternavasio, “Sistema político y organización municipal: Santa Fe y la crisis del régimen oligárquico,” *Anuario* (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario) 13 (1988): 417–22. The fact that registration could only be accomplished at certain limited times and places may well have been more of an impediment to voter turnout than the tax-paying requirement.

43. As table 1 demonstrates, the post-1928 municipal electoral system produced a higher proportion of nonelite councilmen. Although the 1928 law provided for universal male suffrage in these elections, the system of proportional representation it imposed probably had a larger impact on the social composition of the city council. The law allowed Socialists and Communists, who tended not to come from elite backgrounds, to gain seats on the council despite winning only a small proportion of the votes cast. For more on these elections, see chapter 6.

44. Examples of “elite” Radical councilmen include: Emilio Cardarelli, Enrique Ferreyra, Oscar C. Meyer, and Pedro Giménez Melo. “Nonelite” PDP council members include: Manuel Dall’Orso, Hipólito Zubía, Estéban Rossi, and José Lo Valvo.

45. Diego Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de la Provincia de Santa Fe*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Ediar, 1967). This work, organized alphabetically, has no page numbers.

46. *Revista de la Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales* (Universidad Nacional del Litoral) 1, no. 1 (1 October 1922): 3–4.

47. *Hacienda y Administración: Publicación de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Comerciales y Políticas* 1, no. 1 (November 1923): 88.

48. *Homenaje al centenario de la jura de la independencia argentina: Album biográfico* (Rosario, 1916). For biographical information on Antelo, Lo Valvo, and Dell'Oro, see Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de Santa Fe*.

49. Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de Santa Fe*. I have not found any information on the extent of Bertotto's education.

50. Eduardo A. Zimmermann, *Los liberales reformistas: La cuestión social en la Argentina, 1890-1916* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995), 34-35, 68-78.

51. Provincia de Santa Fe, *Censo de la población escolar: Año 1912* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1913), 46.

52. *Cuarto censo municipal*, 186, 194.

53. On the university reform movement, see Richard Walter, *Student Politics in Argentina: The University Reform and Its Effects* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

54. Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de Santa Fe*; Juan Alvarez, *Historia de Rosario (1689-1939)* (Buenos Aires: López, 1943), 593; Alcides Greca, "Jorge Raúl Rodríguez," *Revista de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Comerciales y Políticas* (Universidad Nacional del Litoral) 3, no. 9 (1940): 413-16.

55. Ternavasio, "Sistema Político," 429-31. For the CUA directors, see Centro Unión de Almaceneros y Comerciantes Detallistas, *75 aniversario, 1894-1969* (Rosario, 1971), 207-10.

56. For the names of the delegates, see *La Capital*, 20 February 1914, 6.

57. *La Capital*, 2 April 1916, 7.

58. *Ibid.*, 20 May 1919, 4.

59. For committee members' names, see *La Capital*, 10 January 1916, 6; 7 January 1918, 4; 21 June 1919, 9.

60. For Martínez Cuitiño, see *La Capital*, 15 January 1916, 6; 2 April 1916, 7; 21 January 1918, 4; 7 May 1919, 4; 24 May 1919, 5. For Elizalde, see *La Capital*, 20 February 1914, 6; 10 January 1916, 6; 6 February 1916, 6; 23 June 1919, 4.

61. The argument that the party structures provided an important career ladder during the democratic period was made by Cantón, *El parlamento argentino*, 69-70.

62. See *La Capital*, 20 April 1919, 8.

63. For the committee leaders, see *La Capital*, 13 March 1912, 6; 20 February 1914, 6; 10 January 1916, 6; 21 June 1919, 9.

64. Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de Santa Fe*.

65. *El Quijote*, 1 June 1923, 2.

66. *Democracia*, 18 January 1928, 2.

67. For the 1912 delegates, see *La Capital*, 11 March 1912, 7. The two government ministers were Ricardo Núñez and Antonio Herrera. See Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de Santa Fe*. The departmental committee president was Francisco Elizalde. See *La Capital*, 24 September 1918, 4.

68. *La Capital*, 9 September 1917, 5. The future mayor was Dr. Enrique Ferreyra.

69. For the list of delegates see *Democracia*, 13 March 1928, 2. The longtime party leader who had not served in the provincial congress was Dr. José Benjamín Abalos. For his election as an elector in the 1916 gubernatorial race, see *La Capital*, 28 January 1916, 6.

70. Tabulated from listings in the “Movimiento político” column in *La Capital* between 21 January 1918 and 2 February 1918.

71. Pierre Bourdieu, “Political Representation: Elements for a Theory of the Political Field,” in *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 172–75.

Chapter 3

1. Examining a very different case, Marc W. Steinberg has demonstrated that citizenship and class identities can be closely intertwined and even mutually constitutive. See Steinberg, “‘The Great End of All Government . . .’: Working People’s Construction of Citizenship Claims in Early Nineteenth-Century England and the Matter of Class,” in *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, ed. Charles Tilly (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), 19–50.

2. *Monos y Monadas*, 2 July 1911.

3. *La Capital*, 13 March 1912, 6.

4. *Ibid.*, 31 July 1911, 6. Agustina Prieto refers to residents of Refinería participating in the Club Leandro N. Alem. See Prieto, “Ciudad y barrio obrero: Un análisis comparado de la vida cotidiana de los trabajadores de Rosario” (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas [CONICET], n.d., photocopy), 12.

5. On Arribillaga, see *Memoria de la Bolsa de Comercio de Rosario*, 1904 (Rosario: C. Font, 1905), 55. On Cabanillas, see *Memoria de la Sociedad Unión del Magisterio* (Rosario: Domenech, 1918), 5.

6. *La Capital*, 7 January 1904, 6. Appearing with Caballero at this event was the famous reformer Juan Biallet Massé.

7. Ricardo Caballero, “Sangre Proletaria,” in *Discursos parlamentarios y discursos políticos del Doctor Ricardo Caballero*, ed. Roberto A. Ortelli (Buenos Aires: El Inca, 1929), 391–92.

8. Ricardo Falcón, “Elites urbanas, rol del estado y cuestión obrera (Rosario, 1900–1912),” *Estudios Sociales* 3 (1992): 92.

9. Ricardo Caballero, *Hipólito Yrigoyen y la revolución radical de 1905* (Buenos Aires: Libros de Hispanoamérica, 1975), 7–83. This memoir, written decades after the events described, covers Caballero’s political activities in Rosario through 1916.

10. *Ibid.*, 84–90.

11. The text of the speech is found in Caballero, *Discursos*, 400–407. The occasion is described in Caballero, *Hipólito Yrigoyen*, 89–90.

12. Caballero, *Discursos*, 400–407.

13. On *La tradición nacional*, see Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 117–26. For González’s description of Facundo Quiroga as “a character of Shakespearean tragedy,” see 124. The translation is Goodrich’s.

14. On these literary utopias, see Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1988), 31–43; Christopher Towne Leland, *The Last Happy Men: The Generation of 1922, Fiction, and the Argentine Reality* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 119–47.

15. More than two decades ago, Ernesto Laclau argued that popular resistance to the liberalism of the Argentine elite was constructed out of the discursive raw materials provided by the old tradition of federalism, or what I am calling criollismo. He did not, however, discuss the electoral application of this counterhegemonic discourse, nor did he recognize its articulation with working-class identity during this period. See Laclau, "Towards a Theory of Populism," in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*, by Laclau (London: NLB, 1977), esp. 180–83.

16. Caballero, *Discursos*, 407.

17. *Ibid.*, 405.

18. *Ibid.*, 409–16.

19. *La Capital*, 16 February 1912, 6.

20. *Ibid.*, 9 March 1912, 6; 10 March 1912, 6.

21. Caballero, *Discursos*, 426–36. The quote is from 426–27.

22. For their part, the Socialists denied that they had made any such alliance. See *La Vanguardia*, 25 January 1912, 3.

23. Caballero, *Discursos*, 432–33.

24. *La Capital*, 2 March 1912, 6.

25. Caballero, *Discursos*, 432–33.

26. Caballero, *Hipólito Yrigoyen*, 140.

27. Juan Biale Massé, *El estado de las clases obreras argentinas a comienzos del siglo* (1904; reprint, Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1968), chapter 1.

28. Michael Johns, "The Urbanisation of a Secondary City: The Case of Rosario, Argentina, 1870–1920," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23 (1991): 511.

29. *La Capital*, 5 March 1912, 6.

30. Agustina Prieto, "Condiciones de vida en el barrio Refinería de Rosario: La vivienda de los trabajadores (1890–1914)," *Anuario* (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario) 14 (1989–1990): 169.

31. This argument is advanced by Ricardo Falcón and Alejandra Monserrat, "Estado provincial, partidos políticos y sectores populares (El caso de Rosario: Las elecciones de 1912 y los conflictos sociales)," *Cuadernos del Ciesal* 1, no. 1 (1993): 21–36, esp. 28–30.

32. *Tercer censo municipal del Rosario de Santa Fe*, 72.

33. Biale Massé, *El estado de las clases obreras*, 51. On the widespread diffusion of racial language and ideas in early twentieth-century Argentina, see Eduardo Zimmermann, "Racial Ideas and Social Reform: Argentina, 1890–1916," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72, no. 1 (1992): 23–46.

34. See, for example, Caballero, *Hipólito Yrigoyen*, 93.

35. See Richard W. Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). The lifestyle and working conditions of the gauchos have been the subject of much scholarly debate. For a useful summary, see the following exchange: Jorge Gelman, "New Perspectives on an Old Problem and the Same Source: The Gaucho and the Rural History of the Colonial Río de la Plata," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (November 1989): 715–31; Ricardo D. Salvatore and Jonathan C. Brown, "Comment: The Old Problem of Gauchos and Rural Society," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69, no. 4 (November 1989): 733–45.

36. On gauchesque literature, see Josefina Ludmer, *El género gauchesco: Un tratado sobre la patria* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1988); Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 67–80, 261–78. Both Ludmer and Shumway focus on this literature's depiction of the so-called "patriot gaucho" as a symbol for the Argentine national spirit.

37. Adolfo Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1988), 97. Prieto's work is a groundbreaking analysis of the role of criollista literature in the construction of Argentine nationality.

38. *Ibid.*, 80, n. 54. The Communist Party activist Francisco Monaco worked at Longo and Argento as a youth. In his memoirs, he recalls that the firm was famous in the city and throughout the province for its "gauchesque pamphlets." See Lina Monaco, *Volver a vivir* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Centro de Estudios, n.d.), 22.

39. Enrique García Velloso, "José Podestá y Juan Moreira," *Revista de Historia de Rosario* 9, nos. 21–22 (1971): 43–58. On Rosario's criollo circuses, see Oscar Luis Ensinck, "El teatro en Rosario," in *Historia de las instituciones de la provincia de Santa Fe*, vol. 5 (Santa Fe: Imprenta Oficial de la Provincia, 1973), 341–42. For a description of some of Rosario's payadores, see Héctor Nicolás Zinni, *El Rosario de Satanás*, vol. 1 (Rosario: Fundación Ross, 1992), 84–93.

40. For one description, see *La Capital*, 20 February 1912, 6–7.

41. See *El Censor*, 21 February 1925.

42. Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, 131. On Pampa Soul and the Rosarino Brothers, see *La Capital*, 4 February 1918, 5, and 6 February 1918, 6, respectively. Italian last names were even common among the most celebrated payadores, such as Rosario's Francisco N. Bianco.

43. Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, 98–99, 151–52. The popularity of western movies among contemporary Native Americans represents an interesting case for comparison. See JoEllen Shively, "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films among American Indians and Anglos," *American Sociological Review* 57, no. 6 (December 1992): 725–34.

44. R. Aguirre, *El tigre del desierto*, 3rd ed. (Rosario: Alfonso Longo, n.d.), 20. Aguirre prefaced his poem by declaring his commitment to "the national stock."

45. Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, 66, 155–56.

46. Angel Amante, *Los Hermanos Barrientos*, 4th ed. (Rosario: Alfonso Longo, n.d.), 11.

47. *Ibid.*, 21–22.

48. Aguirre, *El tigre*, 6.

49. Caballero, *Discursos*, 435–36.

50. On the importance of narrative in the process of identity formation, see Margaret R. Somers, "The narrative constitution of identity: A relational and network approach," *Theory and Society* 23 (1994): 605–49; George Steinmetz, "Reflections on the Role of Social Narratives in Working-Class Formation: Narrative Theory in the Social Sciences," *Social Science History* 16, no. 3 (fall 1992): 489–516.

51. *La Capital*, 1 February 1914, 6. See also *La Vanguardia*, 21 March 1912, 1.

52. *Ibid.*, 31 July 1911, 6.

53. *Ibid.*, 29 March 1912, 6, cited in Carlos Malamud Rikles, *Partidos políticos y elecciones en la Argentina: la Liga del Sur (1908–1916)* (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1997).

54. Editor's note in García Velloso, "José Podestá y Juan Moreira," 44–45.

55. In the early decades of the twentieth century, certain conservative intellectuals in Argentina—most notably, Leopoldo Lugones and Ricardo Rojas—pointed to *Martín Fierro* as the embodiment of national identity. But even for these thinkers, *moreirismo*—the popular literature and cultural practices celebrating gauchos like Juan Moreira—was to be resisted as the symbol of crime, immorality, and revolutionary unrest. See Patricia Funes, "Nación, patria, argentinidad: La reflexión intelectual sobre la nación en la década de 1920," in *Representaciones inconclusas: Las clases, los actores y los discursos de la memoria, 1912–1946*, ed. Waldo Ansaldi, Alfredo Pucciarelli, and José C. Villarruel (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1995), 133; David Viñas, *Literatura argentina y política: De Lugones a Walsh* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1996), 63–64; Likewise, Adolfo Prieto analyzes the efforts of Rafael Obligado and other poets to transform the gauchos of texts such as *Juan Moreira* into characters worthy of civilized high culture: See Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, 113–34.

56. *La Capital*, 3 January 1918, 6.

57. Similarly, Rosarino politician Alcides Greca had called on teachers to emphasize the historical contributions of Argentina's statesmen, political thinkers, and scientists over the violent acts of the old gauchos. See chapter 1.

58. "El taita caballerito" was composed in 1916 by José Luis Padula. See Héctor Nicolás Zinni, *Vida nostálgica de lo que fue* (Rosario: Ediciones del Viejo Almacén, 1997), 18. The definition is from José Gobello, *Nuevo diccionario lunfardo* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1994), 237.

59. *La Capital*, 19 March 1912, 6.

60. *Ibid.*, 31 March 1912, 5.

61. *Ibid.*, 1 April 1912, 6.

62. *La Vanguardia*, 5 April 1912, 2. Falcón and Monserrat also argue that the Radicals received significant working-class support. Falcón and Monserrat, "Estado provincial," 25–27.

63. See, for example, *La Nación*, 1 April 1912, 9; *La Capital*, 1 April 1912, 6.

64. *La Rebelión*, 1 May 1913, 9–10.

65. *Ibid.*, 30 June 1913, 1; *El Comunista*, 4 June 1921, 4.

66. While 15,828 men turned out for the 1912 gubernatorial election, only 4,859 (less than one-third) voted in the city council elections of that year. See Marcela Ternavasio, "Sistema político y organización municipal: Santa Fe y la crisis del régimen oligárquico," *Anuario* (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario) 13 (1988): 417–22.

67. For biographical information on Infante as well as an account of his term as mayor, see Patricia S. Pasquali, *J. Daniel Infante, pensamiento y acción* (Rosario: n.d., typescript).

68. *El Mensajero*, 11 March 1905. Articles from this newspaper are taken from a large collection of clippings that belonged to Infante and is now housed at the library of the Instituto de Historia at the Universidad Católica de Rosario.

69. For Infante's belief that Liguistas and Radicals should unite against the oligarchy, see for example: *El Mensajero*, 13, 15, and 17 July 1911, and 10 August 1911. For his explicitly pro-Radical sentiments, see *El Mensajero*, 1 August 1911. In an article offering advice to the newly elected Radical government, he referred to himself as "an old friend" of the UCR: *El Mensajero*, 19 May 1912.

70. On the agrarian conflict, see Marta Bonaudo and Cristiana Godoy, "Una

corporación y su inserción en el proyecto agro-exportador: La Federación Agraria Argentina (1912–1933),” *Anuario* (Escuela de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Rosario) 11 (1985): 165–76; Plácido Grela, *El grito de Alcorta: Historia de la rebelión campesina de 1912* (Rosario: Tierra Nuestra, 1958). For the full text of the commission’s report, see *El Mensajero*, 23 July 1912.

71. For Infante’s professed socialism and his denial of membership in the UCR, see *El Mensajero*, 26 July 1912.

72. *El Mensajero*, 11 October 1912.

73. *La Capital*, 20 November 1912, 6.

74. For Infante’s speech, see *La Capital*, 21 November 1912, 6. Responses from various local newspapers are quoted in *La Capital*, 22 November 1912, 6.

75. *Ibid.*, 4 December 1912, 6.

76. *Ibid.*, 24 December 1912, 6. On the hostile reaction to Infante’s proposals, see Juan Alvarez, *Historia de Rosario (1689–1939)* (Buenos Aires: López, 1943), 574. For one example of this hostility, see *La Capital*, 27 January 1913, 7. For a positive evaluation of Infante’s budget, see *La Reacción*, 28 December 1912. This article is available in Infante’s clipping collection, cited above.

77. *La Capital*, 27 November 1912, 6.

78. Letter from H. Solari, 11 February 1913, in Nicolás R. Amuchástegui, *Legajo personal: Asesor Municipal-Rosario, 1912, 1913, 1916, 1918*, a personal scrapbook housed at Rosario’s Biblioteca Argentina.

79. *La Capital*, 29 January 1913, 7. Interestingly, Correa admitted that the workers lived in squalor but argued that a pay raise would not improve their living conditions. Workers lived four in a room, he argued, not because they had to, but because that was the lifestyle they wanted. If their wages were increased, the workers would merely save more, while continuing to live in the way they were accustomed.

80. *Ibid.*, 2 April 1913, 6. See also: *Ibid.*, 29 March 1913, 7; 31 March 1913, 6.

81. Liguista politicians made the same argument. For example, one provincial congressman argued that Infante had sought “to convince the workers that by demonstrating against the Council they would receive pay raises.” Santa Fe, Cámara de Diputados, *Diario de Sesiones* (Santa Fe, 1913), 79.

82. *La Capital*, 3 April 1913, 6. When the strikers sent copies of the manifesto to the city council, the newspaper assumed that Infante had instructed them to do so, so that he could blame the strike on the council. See *La Capital*, 4 April 1913, 6.

83. *El Mensajero*, 6 April 1913; *La Capital*, 6 April 1913, 10.

84. *El Mensajero*, 9 April 1913; *La Capital*, 9 April 1913, 7.

85. *La Capital*, 9 April 1913, 7. For the council’s resolution of the strike, see *La Capital*, 12 April 1913, 8.

86. *Ibid.*, 11 April 1913, 7.

87. *El Mensajero*, 10 April 1913.

88. *La Vanguardia*, 13 April 1913, 2. Testifying before the provincial senate, Minister of Government Herrera argued that only some of the committee’s members were Radicals and provided a list of the committee’s members in order to substantiate this point. Even this list, though, cited two known Radicals, including then Caballerista Alejandro Nogués. See Santa Fe, Cámara de Senadores, *Diario de sesiones: Período ordinario de 1913* (Santa

Fe: *La Democracia*, 1913), 149-50. (Senate *Diario* cited hereafter as SFCS.)

89. *La Capital*, 13 April 1913, 7.

90. Quoted in *ibid.*, 14 April 1913, 7.

91. *Ibid.*, 15 April 1913, 6.

92. An account of the tramway strike can be found in María Alejandra Monserrat, "Aspectos sobre la evolución del movimiento obrero y el anarquismo en Rosario entre 1910 y 1916" (Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas [CONICET], 1990, photocopy), 30-45.

93. *La Vanguardia*, 21-22 April 1913, 2; *La Capital*, 21 April 1913, 6.

94. *La Capital*, 27 April 1913, 8.

95. These estimates are drawn from SFCS (1913), 150; *La Rebelión*, 8 June 1913, 1.

96. *La Capital*, 25 April 1913, 7. While *La Capital* estimated the number of rioters at 2,000, Minister of Government Herrera, testifying in the provincial senate, claimed that the number was between 5,000 and 6,000. SFCS (1913), 144.

97. *La Capital*, 26 April 1913, 6; 27 April 1913, 8.

98. These numbers were offered by provincial senator Gerardo Costanti; see SFCS (1913), 124.

99. *La Capital*, 23 April 1913, 6.

100. *Ibid.*, 24 April 1913, 6. For Caballero's and Infante's leadership of the "popular independent committee," see *ibid.*, 16 April 1913, 6.

101. SFCS (1913), 122. The speaker, again, is Gerardo Costanti.

102. *Ibid.*, 149-53. Herrera argued that the tramway workers were hostile to the city council from the beginning, but he did not deny the committee's efforts to further politicize the strike.

103. *La Capital*, 30 April 1913, 7; *La Vanguardia*, 30 April 1913, 1.

104. Monserrat, "Aspectos sobre la evolución del movimiento obrero," 37; Falcón and Monserrat, "Estado provincial," 33.

105. See, for example: *La Capital*, 4 April 1913, 6.

106. Falcón and Monserrat ("Estado provincial," 33) cite the censuses of 1900 and 1906 as demonstrating that a majority of tramway workers were Argentine, but of course this is not the same as saying they were criollos. They further cite Juan Alvarez's assertion that the majority of tramway workers were "criollos orilleros."

107. Compañía General de los Tranvías Eléctricos del Rosario, "Planilla de sueldos del 10 al 15 de mayo 1916." These handwritten records are housed at Rosario's Museo de la Ciudad. Of 453 motormen and guards, I counted 120 with obviously non-Spanish last names. This is a conservative estimate, which in any case would be higher if there were some way to distinguish the last names of Spanish immigrants.

108. Quoted in *La Capital*, 14 April 1913, 7.

109. *Ibid.*, 3 April 1913, 6; *La Vanguardia*, 13 April 1913, 2.

110. *La Vanguardia*, 23 April 1913, 1. A manifesto later released by the Socialists blamed political agitators for the disorder. See *La Capital*, 28 April 1913, 6. For a similar denunciation, see *La Vanguardia*, 28-29 April 1913, 1.

111. *La Capital*, 27 April 1913, 8.

112. *Ibid.*, 28 April 1913, 6; 29 April 1913, 7.

113. This description of events is drawn from *ibid.*, 28 April 1913, 6. For Caballero's efforts to direct the strike against the Liga del Sur, see *La Vanguardia*, 2–3 May 1913, 1.

114. *La Capital*, 1 May 1913, 7.

115. *Ibid.*, 3 May 1913, 6.

116. SFCs (1913), 172.

117. Quoted in *La Vanguardia*, 5–6 May 1913, 1.

118. Quoted in *La Capital*, 2 May 1913, 6.

119. *La Rebelión*, 8 June 1913, 1.

120. *La Vanguardia*, 2 May 1913, 1. This dispute over the 1913 tramway strike is most likely the source of the Socialists' allegation, repeated by David Rock, that the Rosario anarchists were allied with the Radical party. See David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 120–21. There is no evidence to suggest that such an alliance existed. Justo and Bravo made this public accusation to account for the anarchist federation's hostility to their own intervention in the tramway conflict. This hostility was motivated by ideology and a desire to monopolize the role of labor's representative, not by any desire to help the Radicals.

Chapter 4

1. This image of the democratic era derives in large part from David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Rock attributes the success of Hipólito Yrigoyen's Radical party to the adept application of patronage through an extensive network of political committees. See also Gardenia Vidal, "Los partidos políticos y el fenómeno clientelístico luego de la aplicación de la Ley Sáenz Peña: La Unión Cívica Radical de la provincia de Córdoba, 1912–1930," in *La construcción de las democracias rioplatenses: proyectos institucionales y prácticas políticas, 1900–1930*, ed. Fernando J. Devoto and Marcela P. Ferrari (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1994), 189–217. Similarly, Marcela Ferrari has argued that the Radicals were only able to win elections in Buenos Aires province after the federal intervention of 1917 had given the party control of state power and the means to engage in clientelism. See Ferrari, "Persistencias y transformaciones en las redes de fidelidad política a través de los resultados electorales en la provincia de Buenos Aires, 1914–1921," in *La construcción de las democracias rioplatenses: proyectos institucionales y prácticas políticas, 1900–1930*, ed. Devoto and Ferrari (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1994), 137–67.

2. For an interpretation of political conflict in this period that focuses on politicians' competing understandings of democratic representation, see Ana María Mustapic, "Conflictos institucionales durante el primer gobierno radical: 1916–1922," *Desarrollo Económico* 24, no. 93 (1984): 85–108. Mustapic's analysis, though, does not isolate the fear of class politics as a key factor in creating partisan strife.

3. Manuel Menchaca, *La acción gubernativa del Doctor Manuel J. Menchaca: En 1913, Breve reseña, Notas estadísticas* (Santa Fe: Salatín Hnos., 1914), 4.

4. Politicians were often more frank in their private communications. The correspondence between B. L. Barreto and Juan Cepeda, two prominent Santa Fe politicians of the period, is extremely revealing on the subject of party maneuvers. In one example, Barreto urges Cepeda to "make alliances in the Legislature in order to put the government in check"

and suggests that certain administrative reform projects deserve support not only on their merits, but also because they would weaken the government. In B. L. Barreto, La Plata, to Juan Cepeda, Rosario, 26 February 1917, private collection (estate of Juan Cepeda), Rosario.

5. Menchaca, *La acción gubernativa*, 15.
6. See, for example, *La Capital*, 26 February 1912, 6; 20 April 1913, 9.
7. Santa Fe, Cámara de Diputados, *Diario de Sesiones* (Santa Fe, 1913), 12. (The Chamber of Deputies *Diario* is hereafter cited as SFCD.)
8. *Ibid.*, 17.
9. *Ibid.*, 17.
10. *Ibid.*, 69-84.
11. SFCD (1914), 424-30.
12. *Ibid.*, 558.
13. On the difficult economic situation facing workers, see *La Capital*, 29 June 1914, 6.
14. SFCD (1914), 536-40.
15. *Ibid.*, 560-61.
16. *Ibid.*, 517.
17. *La Capital*, 29 June 1914, 6.
18. Santa Fe, Cámara de Senadores, *Diario de Sesiones* (Período extraordinario, 1914), 16-59, 100-253. (The senate *Diario* is hereafter cited as SFCS.)
19. See SFCD (1915-1918).
20. Manuel J. Menchaca, *Mensaje del Gobernador de Santa Fe Dr. Manuel J. Menchaca: Año 1914* (Santa Fe: Salatin Hnos., 1916), 10.
21. SFCD (1914), 469.
22. SFCS (1914), 94-128.
23. SFCD (1914), 451.
24. *Ibid.*, 454.
25. *Ibid.*, 502, 508.
26. *La Capital*, 28 June 1914, 6. The Liguistas' fear that the municipal reform bill represented an attempt to rally workers against the Rosario City Council was evident in early June, during the provincial senate's initial treatment of the measure. Liga del Sur leader Enrique Thedy accused the Radical supporters of the bill of trying "to establish a Radical one-party state [*unicato radical*]." Moreover, he reminded the senate that during the 1913 strikes, Mayor Infante had actively sought the resignation of Liguista councilmen. In SFCS (1914), 102. By the end of the month, many Radicals seemed to share this position.
27. *La Capital*, 29 June 1914, 6.
28. *Ibid.*, 21 July 1914, 6, 9.
29. *Ibid.*, 23 July 1914, 8. See also *ibid.*, 6 August 1914, 6. For an earlier example of the same type of attack, see *ibid.*, 12 February 1914, 6.
30. Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria: 1914* (Rosario: Artes Gráficas, 1915), 85-86. On the original meeting, see also *La Capital*, 8 August 1914, 6.
31. On the discussion in the city council, see *La Capital*, 9 August 1914, 6. For the senate's approval, see SFCS (Período extraordinario, 1914), 92.
32. See Infante's report on the activities of the commission in *El Mensajero*, 23, 24, and

26 December 1914. Infante was critical of the provincial government for being slow to deliver the funds it promised, and he attacked wealthy Rosarinos for their stinginess.

33. *La Capital*, 19 February 1914, 6.

34. SFCs (1913), 196–200.

35. See, for example, *La Capital*, 2 February 1914, 6.

36. *Ibid.*, 6. Predictably, pro-Radical commentators saw the rally as impressive in both size and quality. See Raúl Villarroel, “Santa Fe,” *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 7 (1913–1914): 745.

37. *La Capital*, 19 February 1914, 7.

38. *Ibid.*, 20 February 1914, 6.

39. *Ibid.*, 1 March 1914, 6.

40. *Ibid.*, 2 March 1914, 6.

41. *Ibid.*, 3 March 1914, 6.

42. Menchaca, *Mensaje* 1914, 7.

43. *La Capital*, 29 October 1914, 6, 7; 31 October 1914, 6; 4 November 1914, 6.

44. *Ibid.*, 11 November 1914, 6; 13 November 1915, 6. See also Arthur Francis Liebscher, “Commercial Expansion and Political Change: Santa Fe Province, 1897–1916” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1975), chapter 5.

45. *La Capital*, 21 November 1915, 6. On Lehmann, see Diego Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de la Provincia de Santa Fe*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Ediar, 1967). On Elizalde’s membership in the Bolsa, see Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria 1907* (Rosario, 1908), 74.

46. See Richard J. Walter, *The Province of Buenos Aires and Argentine Politics, 1912–1943* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 38–40.

47. For the Dissidents’ platform, see *La Capital*, 22 November 1915, 6. For that of the PDP, see *La Capital*, 7 January 1916, 6. On the Menchaca administration’s commitment to these policies, see Menchaca, *Mensaje* 1914 and *La acción gubernativa*, 6–7, 13–15.

48. *La Capital*, 6 February 1916, 7.

49. See, for example, *ibid.*, 6 January 1916, 6.

50. *Ibid.*, 29 January 1916, 6.

51. *Ibid.*, 5 October 1915, 6.

52. *Ibid.*, 26 October 1915, 6.

53. See, for example, *ibid.*, 18 October 1915, 6; 10 January 1916, 6.

54. Menchaca claimed that his 1912 campaign was inspired by “high ideals of progress.” In Menchaca, *Mensaje* 1912, 4. Moreover, he repeatedly condemned the “personalisms” of the old “oligarchic” political system. See Menchaca, *La acción gubernativa*, 5.

55. Quoted in *La Capital*, 3 December 1914, 6.

56. Quoted in *ibid.*, 3 February 1916, 6. Despite his anti-intellectual rhetoric, even Infante argued that citizens should vote for ideas, rather than men. Propagandizing on behalf of the Dissidents, he argued that “[t]o vote for the Dissidents . . . is not to vote for their men, but for their principles.” In *El Mensajero*, 29 January 1916.

57. *La Capital* frequently lauded the Socialists for their commitment to principles. See *La Capital*, 27 March 1913, 6; 1 March 1914, 6. The overlap between Socialist and Progressive Democratic ideology helps to explain why José Guillermo Bertotto found his

conversion from one party to the other so unproblematic.

58. *La Rebelión*, 1 May 1914, 4.

59. See, for example, *La Capital*, 14 February 1914, 6; 5 February 1916, 6. PDP propaganda was also guilty of a certain "personalism" insofar as it attempted to elevate the party's leader, Lisandro de la Torre, to heroic stature. See Carlos Malamud Rikles, *Partidos políticos y elecciones en la Argentina: La Liga del Sur (1908-1916)* (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1997).

60. B. L. Barreto, La Plata, to Juan Cepeda, Rosario, 28 January 1917, private collection (estate of Juan Cepeda), Rosario.

61. On the use of fraud and electoral machines prior to 1912, see Hilda Sabato, *La política en las calles: Entre el voto y la movilización, Buenos Aires, 1862-1880* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998), 109-38; Natalio R. Botana, *El orden conservador: La política argentina entre 1880 y 1916* (1977; reprint, Buenos Aires: Hyspamérica, 1985), 174-89.

62. *La Capital*, 7 February 1916, 6.

63. *Tercer censo municipal del Rosario de Santa Fe* (Rosario: La República, 1910), 104.

64. Aníbal Viguera has argued that David Rock exaggerates the extent to which Radical party patronage was aimed at middle-class, rather than working-class voters. Viguera, "Participación electoral y prácticas políticas de los sectores populares en Buenos Aires, 1912-1922," *Entrepasados* 1, no. 1 (1991): 18, 32, n. 49. Joel Horowitz has demonstrated that patronage by itself cannot have accounted for Radical President Hipólito Yrigoyen's popularity in the 1912-1930 period. Horowitz, "Bosses and Clients: Municipal Employment in the Buenos Aires of the Radicals, 1916-1930," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 31, no. 3 (1999): 617-44.

65. Statistics on Rosario's political demonstrations were compiled from the listings in *La Capital's* "Movimiento Político" column, 27 January-4 February 1916 and 21 January-2 February 1918. Because *La Capital* did not publicize the governing party's actions, no Radical events were listed in 1916. The Radical rallies listed in 1918 were held by the anti-Dissident faction.

66. Ricardo Caballero, *Discursos parlamentarios y discursos políticos del Doctor Ricardo Caballero*, ed. Roberto A. Ortelli (Buenos Aires: El Inca, 1929), 445.

67. *Ibid.*, 446-47. In this speech, Caballero attempted to depict his own Dissident faction as the true Radical party. Toward this end, he described the dead Núñez as a martyr to his pro-labor political cause, asserting that the former chief of police had treated workers better than any of his predecessors.

68. *El Mensajero*, 29 January 1916.

69. *Ibid.*, 31 January 1916.

70. *Ibid.*, 1 February 1916.

71. The electoral results in Rosario's electoral districts are also consistent with this conclusion. The Dissidents won in seven of the ten districts, losing the others to the PDP. Two of the three districts taken by the PDP were central areas, where many of the city's wealthier citizens lived (alongside some poorer residents, to be sure). The third, section ten, was a largely working-class area. But the small number of voters in this district makes the results here difficult to read. In any case, the PDP defeated the Dissidents by 292 votes to 284. The Socialists' unusually high total in this district (ninety-five votes, or

12 percent—three times higher than the proportion the party received in the department as a whole) suggests that they may have siphoned some working-class support away from the Dissidents.

72. Caballero himself argued that by accusing them of “política criolla,” the PDP inadvertently helped the Dissidents’ cause. See Caballero, *Hipólito Yrigoyen y la revolución radical de 1905* (Buenos Aires: Libros de Hispanoamérica, 1975), 186–87.

73. In the department of Rosario, the voting for presidential electors produced the following results: The Dissidents received 7,900 votes, the PDP 7,749, and the officialist Radicals 3,860. *La Capital*, 15 April 1916, 6.

74. This famous episode is discussed in Caballero, *Hipólito Yrigoyen*, 189–98.

75. Daniel Infante, among other observers, credited Caballero with having single-handedly convinced the Dissident electors to support Yrigoyen. Infante had at first publicly criticized Caballero for wavering on the issue. But once the Dissidents’ support for Yrigoyen was confirmed, Infante called for a public act to honor his old friend. See *El Mensajero*, 13 March 1916, 24 May 1916, 10 June 1916.

76. On the strike, see Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria 1915* (Rosario: Artes Gráficas, 1916), 16.

77. *La Capital*, 20 August 1915, 6.

78. *Ibid.*, 11 November 1915, 7.

79. *Ibid.*, 21 October 1915, 11, 12.

80. *Ibid.*, 27 October 1915, 7.

81. *Ibid.*, 30 October 1915, 7.

82. *Ibid.*, 3 November 1915, 7; 4 November 1915, 10.

83. *Ibid.*, 7 November 1915, 6; 10 November 1915, 6. Daniel Infante agreed with this characterization of Culaciati’s dismissal. See *El Mensajero*, 9 February 1916.

84. *La Capital*, 11 November 1915, 7.

85. Manuel J. Menchaca, *Mensaje del Gobernador de Santa Fe Dr. Manuel J. Menchaca: Año 1916* (Santa Fe: Salatín Hnos., 1916), 9.

Chapter 5

1. *La Capital*, 9 July 1917, 5.

2. *Ibid.*, 27 July 1917, 4. See also *ibid.*, 8 August 1917, 5. Of course this optimism was not unqualified. See, for example, *ibid.*, 31 July 1917, 4, and 21 August 1917, 4, on the problem of “political fetishism” and the need to further educate the electorate.

3. On the 1917 railroad strike, see Heidi Goldberg, “Railroad Unionization in Argentina, 1912–1929: The Limitations of Working Class Alliance,” (Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 1979), chapter 3.

4. Historians have long been aware of this gradual loss of faith in democracy, but they have been hard-pressed to explain its origins. Moreover, they have not examined the impact of this phenomenon on the political process in the 1917–1923 period. See, for example, Daniel James, “Uncertain Legitimacy: The Social and Political Restraints Underlying the Emergence of Democracy in Argentina, 1890–1930,” in *The Social Construction of Democracy, 1870–1990*, ed. George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1995),

56-70; Cristián Buchrucker, *Nacionalismo y peronismo: La Argentina en la crisis ideológica mundial (1927-1955)* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1987), 27-83.

5. Rosario's Bolsa de Comercio reported that the strikes of September and October 1917 reached "proportions never suspected in our country." Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria 1917* (Rosario, 1918), 20.

6. José Domenech, interview by Luis Alberto Romero, transcript, 21 December 1970 (Di Tella Oral History Project, Columbia University, New York).

7. The perception that the moderate union leadership was losing its control over the more radical masses of railroad workers was echoed in *La Capital*, 10 August 1917, 4.

8. David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 140-42. After the end of the strike, the strikers' commission thanked both Noriega and the army colonel who had led the national forces in Rosario for their support during the conflict. See *La Capital*, 19 August 1917, 5.

9. *La Capital*, 9 September 1917, 5; 11 September 1917, 5; 12 September 1917, 5; 13 September 1917, 5; 15 September 1917, 6.

10. On the economic factors, see Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, 126; Ofelia Pianetto, "Mercado de trabajo y acción sindical en la Argentina, 1890-1922," *Desarrollo Económico* 24, no. 94 (1984): 305. On Yrigoyen's pro-labor strike interventions see Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, 125-56.

11. *La Capital*, 17 August 1917, 4.

12. *Ibid.*, 16 September 1917, 5.

13. Caballero had in fact involved himself in the railroad strike. See *ibid.*, 18 August 1917, 5.

14. *Ibid.*, 9 September 1917, 5.

15. These quotes are from *ibid.*, 29 January 1918, 4; and 21 January 1918, 4.

16. Quoted in *ibid.*, 28 January 1918, 4.

17. *Ibid.*, 5 January 1918, 4. *La Nación's* Rosario correspondent agreed with this depiction of Dissident propaganda, accusing the party of "violent attacks on newspapers and people." See *La Nación*, 2 January 1918, 6.

18. *La Capital*, 20 January 1918, 5. On the disturbance, see *La Vanguardia*, 20 January 1918, 4.

19. *La Capital*, 5 January 1918, 4.

20. *Ibid.*, 9 January 1918, 5.

21. On the speech and reactions to it, see *ibid.*, 31 January 1918, 4-5. The wealthy Spaniard was Toribio Sánchez, an ally of Caballero in the past. The Dissidents had used this type of xenophobia throughout the campaign. See *La Nación*, 22 January 1918, 8.

22. One month later, the election for national deputies yielded nearly identical results; running as a candidate himself, Caballero received the highest number of votes in Rosario. See *La Capital*, 23 March 1918, 5.

23. Calculated from raw results in *ibid.*, 23 March 1918, 5.

24. Rodolfo B. Lehmann, *Mensaje del Gobernador de la Provincia de Santa Fe Sr. Rodolfo B. Lehmann a las honorables cámaras legislativas: Año 1917* (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, 1917), 85-86.

25. Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, 140-41, n. 38.

26. Quoted in *La Capital*, 31 January 1918, 5.
27. Bertotto, for example, had argued that while the Dissidents' rhetoric might fool a rural peon, it would not trick the more sophisticated workers of the city. *Ibid.*
28. *La Capital*, 14 March 1918, 5.
29. *Ibid.*, 4 February 1918, 4.
30. *Ibid.*, 8 February 1918, 5. Ricardo Rojas had made this same suggestion when the Sáenz Peña Law was first proposed in 1911, but it had never been popular within the mainstream political establishment in Rosario. See David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 57.
31. To a certain extent, this seasonality reflected a general pattern in Argentina in which labor unions were more likely to strike in the spring and summer months, when the increased demand for labor in agricultural zones tightened the job market. Union bargaining power was at its highest during the peak harvest months of December and January, both because of reduced surplus labor and because a strike at that time would be particularly threatening to the export economy.
32. Adrián Ascolani, "Guerra a muerte al chacarero: Los conflictos obreros en el campo santafesino, 1918–1920," in *Conflictos obrero-rurales pampeanos (1900–1937)*, ed. Waldo Ansaldi (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1993), 2:136–40.
33. *La Capital*, 11 December 1918, 4.
34. On the police strike, see *ibid.*, 12 December 1918, 4; 13 December 1918, 4. See also Julio Gerónimo San Miguel, "La huelga policial de 1918," *Revista de Historia de Rosario* 29 (1977): 40–44. For a pro-government perspective, see *La Epoca*, 10 December 1918, 2; 11 December 1918, 2; 12 December 1918, 2.
35. *La Capital*, 10 December 1918, 5.
36. Quoted in *ibid.*, 25 December 1918, 4.
37. *Ibid.*, 10 October 1918, 4. Similarly, *La Capital* argued that the Dissidents' policy of fomenting strikes when it served their interests had plunged the province into chaos. In *ibid.*, 16 December 1918, 4.
38. José Guillermo Bertotto, *El coraje de callar* (Rosario: N.p., 1921), 152–53.
39. *La Acción*, 11 December 1919, 1. The duels, between Dissidents Caballero and Julio Bello, and Progressive Democrats Enzo Bordabehere and Lisandro de la Torre, never took place.
40. Bertotto, *El coraje de callar*, 61–63.
41. *La Noticia*, 14 December 1919, 5.
42. *La Acción*, 11 December 1919, 1.
43. On the Caballero/Mosca talks and on Elizalde's opposition to any attempt at fusion, see *La Capital*, 13 July 1917, 4; 15 July 1917, 6; 19 July 1917, 5. Although Elizalde remained loyal to the Dissident party during the 1918 campaign, his opposition to Caballero was well known. See *La Nación*, 5 January 1918, 8.
44. On Ferreyra's election as secretary of the Departmental Committee, see *La Capital*, 9 September 1917, 5. For his mayoral appointment, see *La Capital*, 28 February 1918, 5.
45. See, for example, *ibid.*, 9 January 1918, 4.
46. On the Ferreyra conflict, see *La Nación*, 2 September 1918, 11; *La Capital*, 2 September

1918, 4; 21 September 1918, 4; 13 October 1918, 4; 17 October 1918, 4; 22 October 1918, 4. After resisting for several weeks, Lehmann finally gave in to the Caballerista pressure and asked for Ferreyra's resignation. Ferreyra refused, but stepped down temporarily, delegating the mayoralty to Fermín Lejarza, the PDP member who was then president of the city council. Ferreyra's idea was to have the council investigate his office to determine if he was guilty of any wrongdoing. The Progressive Democrats initially defended Ferreyra, but in the end could not resist the opportunity to overthrow a Radical mayor. Their investigation uncovered several alleged examples of corruption, providing Lehmann enough political cover to fire Ferreyra as Caballero had requested.

47. *La Nación*, 25 September 1918, 11; *La Capital*, 24 September 1918, 4. *La Capital* optimistically predicted that this election signaled Caballero's "political death."

48. *La Capital*, 17 October 1918, 4. For more on Ferreyra's resignation and Arribillaga's appointment, which provoked rallies and protests by the opposition, see *La Capital*, 23 October 1918, 4.

49. *Ibid.*, 22 October 1918, 5.

50. *Ibid.*, 26 October 1918, 5.

51. B. L. Barreto, La Plata, to Juan Cepeda, Rosario, 20 July 1917, private collection, estate of Juan Cepeda, Rosario.

52. See, for example, *La Capital*, 10 January 1918, 5.

53. *Ibid.*, 2 June 1919, 4. In a manifesto explaining its opposition to Lehmann, Elizalde's faction attacked the government for giving out jobs to win elections, for not passing the legislation that had been promised on the campaign trail, and for undermining Rosario's municipal autonomy by firing Ferreyra. These criticisms echoed attacks made by the PDP and by the Nationalists.

54. Founded in 1918, the Santa Fe newspaper *El Litoral* served as the principal forum for anti-Lehmann sentiment in the northern part of the province. The paper was especially critical of Caballero's "divisive" politics. See Leoncio Gianello, *Historia de Santa Fe* (Santa Fe: Castellví, 1966), 378–79.

55. *La Capital*, 1 December 1919, 4; 2 December 1919, 4. See also Raúl Villarroel, "Ojeada retrospectiva," *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 25 (1922–1923): 265–66.

56. Quoted in *La Capital*, 1 December 1919, 4.

57. *Ibid.*, 27 January 1920, 4. See also 9 January 1920, 4.

58. For Lejarza's response to these charges, see *ibid.*, 3 January 1920, 4.

59. Likewise, a significant proportion of the 2,034 votes that were either cast for the Socialist Party or left blank must also have come from workers.

60. Quoted in *Bandera Roja*, 24 January 1919, 2.

61. *La Capital*, 7 January 1919, 4.

62. *La Tarde*, 5 February 1920, 1.

63. *La Capital*, 1 January 1920, 3.

64. On the Tragic Week, see David Rock, "Lucha civil en la Argentina. La Semana Trágica de enero de 1919," *Desarrollo Económico* 11 (March 1972): 165–215; Hugo del Campo, "La Semana Trágica," *Polémica* 53 (1971): 63–84. On the Patriotic League, see Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900–1932: The Argentina Patriotic League* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

65. *La Capital*, 15 January 1919, 5.

66. *Ibid.*, 16 January 1919, 5. The list of members included many of the most prominent Progressive Democrats and Nationalist Radicals as well as at least two Dissidents (Agustín Gatti and Jorge Ferri).

67. *Ibid.*, 18 January 1919, 4.

68. *Ibid.*, 16 May 1919, 4.

69. *Ibid.*, 21 May 1919, 4.

70. *Ibid.*, 16 May 1919, 4. On the various strikes, see, for example, *ibid.*, 17 May 1919, 5.

71. See *ibid.*, 3 May 1919, 4; 9 May 1919, 4; 12 May 1919, 4; 21 May 1919, 4; 30 May 1919, 4.

72. Emilio Cardarelli, *Nuestras instituciones y la paz social: Discurso pronunciado el día 25 de mayo de 1919 en la Plaza de Mayo, en representación de la Liga Patriótica Argentina* (N.p., n.d.), 2. The press, both in Rosario and nationally, warned frequently of the dangers of demagoguery. See, for example, Ricardo Sidicaro, *La política mirada desde arriba: Las ideas del diario La Nación, 1909–1989* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1993), 55–81.

73. *Patria y Orden*, 21 September 1921, 5.

74. Similarly, the Rosario League's statutes, released in June, called for spreading patriotism, sustaining order, and "procuring the greatest harmony among all the inhabitants of the nation." It did not contain any specific reference to immigration or attack on foreigners. See *La Capital*, 15 June 1919, 4.

75. *Ibid.*, 6 June 1919, 4; see also 31 May 1919, 4. The Federación's founders apparently believed that the Bolsa de Comercio was not representing their interests with enough aggressiveness.

76. *Ibid.*, 16 June 1919, 4.

77. On the formation of new corporate organizations in this period and on the connections between these entities and the Patriotic League, see Silvia M. Marchese, "Proyectos de dominación para la Argentina de posguerra," in *El reformismo en el contrapunto: Los procesos de modernización en el Río de la Plata (1890–1930)* (Montevideo: Centro Latinoamericano de Economía Humana [CLAEH], 1989), 137–62.

78. Waldo Ansaldi has argued that the increasing visibility of corporate interest groups in the 1920s responded to the perceived failure of democratic party politics. See Ansaldi, "Profetas de cambios terribles: Acerca de la debilidad de la democracia argentina, 1912–1945," in *Representaciones inconclusas: Las clases, los actores y los discursos de la memoria, 1912–1946*, ed. Waldo Ansaldi, Alfredo Pucciarelli, and José C. Villarruel (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1995), 39–41.

79. *La Capital*, 22 January 1919, 4.

80. *La Noticia*, 14 December 1919, 3.

81. For earlier examples of this line of argument by Rosarinos or Santafesinos, see Isaac Francioni, *Función social de la escuela en la hora presente: Rectificaciones a su orientación actual* (Santa Fe: La Palabra, 1915); Juan Alvarez, "La escuela argentina y el nacionalismo," *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 12 (1916): 334–42.

82. See chapter 1.

83. Lehmann, *Mensaje: Año 1917*, 57.

84. Enrique M. Mosca, *Mensaje de S.E. el Señor Gobernador Enrique M. Mosca a las*

honorables cámaras legislativas: Año 1921 (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, n.d.), 68.

85. *La Capital*, 21 September 1918, 4. See also 22 September 1918, 4; 23 September 1918, 4; 25 September 1918, 4.

86. See Ateneo Popular del Rosario, *Por la instrucción y cultura popular: Un año y medio de labor* (Rosario: Cappino y Bacino, 1914). This school for workers held lectures on such topics as "the materialist theory of history" and "political regimes: unitarism and federalism."

87. Juan Cepeda, *Mensaje del Presidente Pro-Tempore del H. Senado en ejercicio del Poder Ejecutivo Sr. Juan Cepeda a las honorables cámaras legislativas: Año 1920* (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, 1920), 8.

88. Cepeda, *Mensaje: 1920*, 5.

89. Enrique Mosca, *Discurso-programa del Gobernador Dr. Enrique M. Mosca pronunciado ante la junta de electores con motivo de su juramento constitucional el día 9 de mayo de 1920* (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, 1920), 6-7.

90. On the Plaza San Martín massacre, see *La Capital*, 1 September 1920, 4, 11; *El Comunista*, 4 September 1920, 1; 11 September 1920, 1. On the government's response to rural strikes, see Ascolani, "Guerra a muerte," 165-71.

91. Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Fomento, *Estadística y trabajo: Iniciativas del P.E. 1920-1924* (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, n.d.), 19-25, 42-45, 66-67, 72-73.

92. Jefatura Política-Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1921* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1922), 23.

93. Agustín Araya, "Pensamiento del gobierno, en materia de legislación social (Mensaje de 1923)," in Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Fomento, *Estadística y trabajo*, 7-8.

94. Enrique Mosca, *Mensaje de S.E. el señor Gobernador Dr. Enrique M. Mosca a las honorables cámaras legislativas. Año 1923* (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, n.d.), 16.

95. The speech is reproduced in *La Visita del Excelentísimo Señor Presidente de la Nación Doctor Marcelo T. de Alvear, a la ciudad del Rosario, agosto, 1923*, 17-22, Biblioteca Argentina, Rosario. The quote is from p. 21.

96. *Congreso del Trabajo convocado por el Superior Gobierno de la Provincia de Santa Fe y Realizado en la Ciudad de Rosario en Agosto de 1923* (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, n.d.), 9-10.

97. Rosario's anarchists declared their opposition to working with the government immediately after Mosca first proposed the congress in 1920. See *El Comunista*, 9 October 1920, 4.

98. *Orientación*, August 1926, 31.

99. On the Mosca/Caballero pact, see *La Capital*, 11 February 1920, 4; 28 February 1920, 4.

100. For Nationalist Radical resistance to the pact and Ferrarotti's resignation, see *ibid.*, 26 February 1920, 4; 28 February 1920, 4; 28 March 1920, 4; 9 March 1920, 3. On the Caballeristas' efforts to get voters to cast blank ballots, see *ibid.*, 1 October 1920, 4-5.

101. Ricardo Caballero, *Discursos parlamentarios y discursos políticos del Doctor Ricardo Caballero*, ed. Roberto A. Ortelli (Buenos Aires: El Inca, 1929), 438.

102. *Ibid.*, 440.

103. In late 1921, Mosca and Caballero once again appeared close to making a deal. But emboldened by the dominant mood of hostility to Caballero, the governor decided he

could afford to reject Caballero's demands. See *La Capital*, 9 October 1921, 4; 7 January 1922, 3; 8 January 1922, 3; 11 January 1922, 4.

104. The Caballerista manifesto is reproduced in *ibid.*, 28 January 1922, 5.

105. *El Comunista*, 18 September 1920, 3.

106. *Ibid.*, 23 October 1920, 2.

107. *La Capital*, 9 October 1918, 4, 9. The investigation was ordered by the Progressive Democrat Fermín Lejarza, then serving as interim mayor in place of Enrique Ferreyra, who had stepped down temporarily while he challenged his dismissal.

108. *Ibid.*, 11 January 1919, 4. The decline in Caballerista influence occurred in other sectors of the labor movement as well. For example, the Caballeristas had long enjoyed a connection to the teachers' union; the Caballerista politician Domingo Cabanillas was listed as a member and supporter of the union as late as 1918. But during the teachers' strike of 1921, the anarchist press depicted Cabanillas as an enemy of the union. See *Memoria de la Sociedad Unión del Magisterio* (Rosario: Domenech, 1918), 5, 9; *El Comunista*, 11 June 1921, 4.

109. *El Comunista*, 6 February 1921, 4. On the success of the general strike, see *El Comunista*, 19 February 1921, 1.

110. On the soviet, see *ibid.*, 12 February 1921, 1–2; Juan Alvarez, *Historia de Rosario (1689–1939)* (Buenos Aires: López, 1943), 598–99. On the resolution of the municipal strike, see *El Comunista*, 19 February 1921, 1.

111. Lina Monaco, *Volver a vivir* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Centro de Estudios, n.d.), 23–24.

112. Jefatura Política–Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1921*, 264–71. On the attack on Rouillón's house, in which no one was injured, see also *La Capital*, 14 October 1921, 4.

113. Roberto Marrone, *Apuntes para la historia de un gremio (Empleados de Comercio de Rosario)* (Rosario: Llordén, 1974), 61–85.

114. *El Comunista*, 19 February 1921, 1.

115. *Ibid.*, 12 February 1921, 3.

116. *Ibid.*, 11 June 1921, 1.

117. *Tribuna Libertaria*, 27 December 1921, 1.

118. Jefatura Política–Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1922* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1923), 123–29; Jefatura de Policía–Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1923* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1924), 29–35; Jefatura de Policía–Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1924* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1925), 203–13. The 1923 and 1924 reports list nineteen and thirty-seven strikes respectively, because they count each union that went out in solidarity with general strike movements as a separate strike. In 1923, eleven unions joined a forty-eight-hour stoppage to protest the murder of a working-class martyr, while in 1924, thirty-one unions participated in a strike against the national pension law.

119. *Tribuna Libertaria*, 27 December 1921. Rouillón's handling of this strike is treated more positively in *Patria: Revista del Año 1925* 1 (July 1926): 42. For many, though, Rouillón was an enemy of "the working people." See *El Quijote*, 1 June 1923, 1.

120. For a revealing example of this fighting between anarchists and syndicalists, see *Unión Sindical*, 19 August 1922, 2. In this article, the syndicalists accuse the anarchists of interrupting syndicalist rallies and interfering with efforts to distribute propaganda.

121. *La Capital*, 17 January 1924, 4.

Chapter 6

1. Computed from data in *La Capital*, 5 February 1922, 4; 6 February 1922, 4.
2. *La Capital*, 7 October 1924, 4.
3. Jefatura de Policía-Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1924* (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1925), 174.
4. *Liberación*, 17 June 1927, 2.
5. Leandro H. Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero, *Sectores populares, cultura y política: Buenos Aires en la entreguerra* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995), esp. 46-47.
6. See, for example, the advertisements in *La Capital*, 5 October 1924, 19; Nicolás E. De Vita, *¡Echesortu! (Ciudad pequeña metida en la gran ciudad) Apuntes para su futura historia* (Rosario: Amalevi, 1988), 54-55.
7. Jorge E. Hardoy, "La vivienda obrera en una ciudad en expansión: Rosario entre 1858 y 1910," in *Cultura urbana latinoamericana*, ed. Jorge Enrique Hardoy and Richard Morse (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales [CLACSO], 1985), 90.
8. On Barrio Calzada, see *La Capital*, 19 October 1924, 4. On Arroyito, see *Reacción*, 14 June 1925, 1.
9. See, for example, *El Imparcial*, 13 October 1928, 1; *Reacción*, 28 June 1925, 1; *La Capital*, 22 October 1924, 4; *Democracia*, 5 April 1927, 25 August 1927.
10. *Reacción*, 14 June 1925, 1. A similar contrast was evident in Echesortu; see De Vita, *¡Echesortu!*, 53-56, 85-88.
11. Residential neighborhoods built around major places of employment included Refinería, Talleres, and Bajo Saladillo, which was located near the Swift meatpacking plant. See *Reacción*, 28 June 1925, 1. The residential barrios of Echesortu and Mendoza contained at least one relatively large factory within their limits; see *El Comunista*, 2 October 1920, 3. On the suburban locations of some union headquarters, see *La Capital*, 3 May 1925, 5; *Liberación*, 17 June 1927, 4; *El Comunista*, 19 February 1921, 2; *Democracia*, 11 October 1926. On the activities of anarchists, communists, and syndicalists in the outlying barrios, see *El Comunista*, 22 January 1921, 4; *Orientación*, 8 August 1925, 1.
12. On the problem of high rents faced by workers, see *La Capital*, 7 March 1926, 4; 14 November 1922, 4.
13. *Ibid.*, 10 May 1925, 5.
14. Jefatura de Policía-Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1924*, 204-10. On the 1924 general strike, see Joel Horowitz, "Union Reaction to Government Social Welfare Programs: Argentina in the 1920s" (paper presented at annual meeting of the New England Council of Latin American Studies, 5 October 1996); *La Capital*, 5 May 1924, 4; 6 May 1924, 4.
15. Héctor N. Zinni, *Rosario era un espectáculo: Vida teatral, cotidiana, prostibularia y radiofónica*, vol. 1 (Rosario: Homo Sapiens, 1995), 128. Others date the creation of radio station LT3 to 1924; see Monica Noemi Martínez de Neirotti, "Entre la prosperidad y la crisis (1916-1930)," in *Rosario*, vol. 2 (Rosario: Fundación Banco de Boston, 1988), 26.
16. Héctor Nicolás Zinni, *Vida nostálgica de lo que fue* (Rosario: Ediciones del Viejo Almacén, 1997), 49-52.
17. Tim Barnard, "Popular Cinema and Populist Politics," in *Argentine Cinema*, ed. Tim Barnard (Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1986), 23-24.
18. See, for example, Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 120-29.

19. For movie theatres used as union meeting places, see *La Capital*, 12 May 1919, 4; 17 May 1919, 5; 1 May 1927, 4; *El Comunista*, 27 November 1920, 4, and 13 August 1921, 4; *Voluntad*, 5 October 1929, 4.
20. Barnard, "Popular Cinema," 22.
21. On the popularity of tango in Rosario, see Zinni, *Vida nostálgica* and Zinni, *Barrios de tango* (Rosario: Ediciones del Viejo Almacén, 1997).
22. Donald S. Castro, *The Argentine Tango as Social History, 1880-1955: The Soul of the People* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1990), 182.
23. Julio Mafud, *La clase obrera argentina* (Buenos Aires: Distal S.R.L., 1988), 241; Eduardo Romano, ed., *Las letras del tango: Antología cronológica 1900-1980*, 5th ed. (Rosario: Fundación Ross, 1998), 156–57.
24. María Susana Azzi, "The Golden Age and After, 1920s-1990s," in *¡Tango! The Dance, The Song, The Story*, by Simon Collier, et al. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 132–33.
25. Marta E. Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), 65–68.
26. Beatriz Sarlo, *El imperio de los sentimientos: Narraciones de circulación periódica en la Argentina (1917–1927)* (Buenos Aires: Catálogos Editora, 1985).
27. Darío Cantón, *Gardel ¿a quién le cantás?* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1972), 53.
28. Cited in Eduardo P. Archetti, *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 142–43.
29. *Ibid.*, 153.
30. Savigliano, *Tango*, 56–65.
31. Quoted in *ibid.*, 54. The tango is "Pompas de jabón" ("Soap Bubbles," 1925), written by Enrique Cadícamo. The translation is Savigliano's.
32. On Caballero's willingness to make a deal with his former enemies, see *La Acción*, 4 May 1923, 1. On his role in the Aldao campaign, see, for example, *La Capital*, 30 January 1924, 5.
33. Opposition to Mosca's veto of the new provincial constitution was a rallying cry for both the PDP and the Opposition Radicals. Although it remains unproven, one interpretation holds that Mosca gave in to pressure from President Yrigoyen, who opposed the anticlerical elements of the reform. See Darío Macor, *La reforma política en la encrucijada: La experiencia demoprogresista en el Estado provincial santafesino* (Santa Fe: Centro de Estudios Históricos, Universidad Nacional del Litoral [CEDEHIS], 1993), 27–39.
34. For Greca's pro-labor comments, see *La Capital*, 19 January 1924, 5. For the results of the election, see *La Capital*, 4 February 1924, 4.
35. *Democracia*, 5 April 1926.
36. *Ibid.*, 5 April 1927. See also *Libre Palabra*, 8 May 1926, 5; *Reflejos*, 20 October 1926, 6; *Crónica*, 10 September 1927, 7.
37. *La Capital*, 19 June 1927, 4.
38. *Alborada*, 20 October 1924. For another anarchist newspaper hostile to the union movement, see *Libre Acuerdo*, July 1926.
39. Ramón Araya, *Los altos alquileres y la política* (Rosario: La Velocidad, 1924), 15.
40. *Ibid.*, 30, 44.
41. *Ibid.*, 47. The same year, Leopoldo Lugones delivered his famous "Hour of the Sword" speech in which he declared the death of liberal democracy and called on the army to lead

a movement for national rebirth. See David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 72–73.

42. *Patria y Unión*, 1 June 1926, 2.

43. *La Capital*, 5 May 1924, 4. The Bolsa de Comercio took a similar stand. See Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria 1924* (Rosario: Castino, 1925), 149–50.

44. Ricardo Falcón, “Elites urbanas, rol del estado y cuestión obrera (Rosario, 1900–1912),” *Estudios Sociales* 3 (1992), 100–102.

45. *La Capital*, 17 June 1927, 4. The Santa Fe Chamber of Deputies did pass an antigambling measure in 1927. See *La Capital*, 15 June 1927, 4.

46. The deputies first rejected the tax exemption, then revised the vote a few days later. See Santa Fe, Cámara de Diputados, *Diario de Sesiones* (Santa Fe, 1926), 549–56, 633–45. (Chamber of Deputies *Diario* hereafter cited as SFCD.) For the argument that the entrance fee kept out those who could not afford to gamble, see 552–55.

47. Donna J. Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 74.

48. *La Reacción*, 19 April 1925. Also calling for the police to crack down on Pichincha was *Libre Palabra*, 21 August 1926, 2; 28 August 1926, 1. Of course, the campaign against prostitution, as well as gambling, did not originate in these years. See *La Capital*, 31 May 1919, 4.

49. *La Reacción*, 13 March 1927. Quoted in Héctor Nicolás Zinni, *El Rosario de Satánás* (Rosario: Fundación Ross, 1992), 262.

50. The *La Reacción* article quoted above labeled Pichincha’s pimps “Russians, Poles and Frenchmen.” On the connections between nationalism, gender ideologies, and prostitution, see Guy, *Sex and Danger*.

51. *El Censor*, 21 February 1925, 1.

52. Ricardo Aldao, *Mensaje de S.E. el Señor Gobernador Don Ricardo Aldao* (Santa Fe: Imprenta de la Provincia, 1925), 14.

53. See chapter 4.

54. SFCD (1919), 80–90, 138–40, 170–73, 181–82.

55. The Elizaldista Alejandro Nogués made this very argument when he accused the other deputies of making proposals that “will only serve as propaganda in the next elections.” In SFCD (1919), 189. Likewise, *La Capital* also identified the partisan attempt to win votes as the primary obstacle to labor legislation. See *La Capital*, 1 June 1919, 4.

56. José Guillermo Bertotto, *Informe del Diputado Bertotto al electorado de Caseros* (Casilda, Santa Fe: N.p., 1923). See also SFCD (1920), 395, 454–59; SFCD (1921).

57. For the election results, see *La Capital*, 8 February 1926, 6; 9 February 1926, 6. The Yrigoyenista winners were Bernardo Dell’Oro, Domingo Filiberti, Primitivo Sosa, Víctor Pesenti, and Ricardo A. Ortiz for deputy; and Tobías Arribillaga for senator.

58. On the exclusion of the Rosario deputies-elect, which was harshly criticized both by the Yrigoyenistas and the PDP, see *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 32 (1926): 172, 520; *La Capital*, 21 June 1926, 4.

59. SFCD (1926), 481.

60. *Ibid.*, 485.

61. *Ibid.*, 501.

62. See Deputy Angel Saggese’s comments in particular, in *ibid.*, 503.

63. SFCS (1927), 26–28, 30–31.

64. Ibid., 4. For Arribillaga's proposal, see SFCS (1926), 51–53.

65. On Alvear's financial policies and on the schism of 1924, see David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 221–33. As Rock points out, Alvear himself remained somewhat aloof from the Antipersonalists.

66. *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 29 (1924–1925): 558–59; *La Capital*, 14 October 1924, 4; 16 October 1924, 4; 19 October 1924, 4.

67. *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas* 30 (1925): 202–203.

68. For Caballero's own version of his relationship with Yrigoyen, see Caballero, *Hipólito Yrigoyen y la revolución radical de 1905* (Buenos Aires: Libros de Hispanoamérica, 1975).

69. *La Capital*, 6 October 1924, 6.

70. Ricardo Caballero, *Discursos parlamentarios y discursos políticos del Doctor Ricardo Caballero*, ed. Roberto A. Ortelli (Buenos Aires: El Inca, 1929), 16.

71. See, for example, *ibid.*, 249.

72. Ibid., 16–27.

73. This speech is quoted extensively in Diana Quattrocchi-Woisson, *Los males de la memoria: Historia y política en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1995), 61–63. See also Caballero, *Discursos*, 221–51.

74. *La Capital*, 3 January 1926, 4.

75. Caballero, *Discursos*, 230. See also 534–36.

76. *La Capital*, 13 January 1926, 5.

77. Ibid., 21 January 1926, 5.

78. Alberto J. Mazza, *Discursos*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Caille y Vola, 1929), 35–44.

79. *Democracia*, 11 October 1926.

80. Ibid., 5 April 1927, 1.

81. Ibid., 27 January 1928, 1.

82. Computed from raw election results in *La Capital*, 8 February 1928, 5.

83. On Gómez Cello, see Diego Abad de Santillán, *Gran Enciclopedia de la Provincia de Santa Fe*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Ediar, 1967); Víctor de Avilés, *Gobernantes de Santa Fe desde 1810 hasta 1960* (Rosario: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas Brigadier General Estanislao López, 1960), 87.

84. On de la Puente, see Avilés, *Gobernantes*, 162–63. On his presidency of the council of hygiene, see *La Reacción*, 13 January 1924. On his activity in the Yrigoyenista party, see *La Capital*, 12 January 1926, 4.

85. In Rosario, the political utility of an alliance with Yrigoyen had long been apparent. The cover of a local magazine from 1924 shows a statue of “San Yrigoyen” being presented as the “new electoral mascot.” A group of humble Rosarinos are pictured bowing down to the statue, which, interestingly, is being carried by a policeman and a gaucho. See *La Guillotina*, 8 February 1924.

86. Computed from data in *La Capital*, 5 February 1928, 4; 7 February 1928, 7.

87. Darío Canton, *Elecciones y partidos políticos en la Argentina—Historia, interpretación y balance: 1910–1966* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973), 269.

88. *Liberación*, 17 June 1927, 2. Historian David Rock also sees Yrigoyen's popularity

as a sign of declining working-class consciousness; see Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, 233–34.

89. Alcides Greca, *Cuentos del Comité*, 1931, 75–76, Biblioteca Argentina, Rosario.

90. *Democracia*, 2 March 1928, 1; 5 May 1928, 1.

91. *Ibid.*, 27 April 1928, 1.

92. *La Capital*, 10 May 1928, 4; *Democracia*, 9 May 1928, 1. As Lallana's murder suggests, women seem to have been more active in the 1928 strike wave than they had been in previous labor actions. The only detailed analysis of the 1928 port conflict and the strike wave it initiated is Roberto P. Korzeniewicz, "The Labor Politics of Radicalism: The Santa Fe Crisis of 1928," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 73, no. 1 (1993): 1–32. This section owes a great deal to Korzeniewicz's thorough research.

93. *Orientación*, 25 February 1928, 3. The paper continued to complain of working-class apathy in its next issue as well; see *Orientación*, 25 March 1928, 4.

94. *Ibid.*, 1 June 1928, 1.

95. *Ibid.*, 20 June 1928, 3.

96. *Democracia*, 12 May 1928, 1.

97. Caballero, *Discursos*, 501. Caballero's official report on the events of 1928, included in this volume, was also published separately as: *Los conflictos sociales de la ciudad de Rosario y su zona agrícola, relatados al Excmo. Señor Ministro de Gobierno de Santa Fe por el Doctor Ricardo Caballero, Jefe Político del Rosario* (N.p.: 1928).

98. Concejo Deliberante de Rosario, *Diario de Sesiones* (1928), 58.

99. On the Bolsa's intervention, the negotiation, and the ultimate settlement, see Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1928* (Rosario: Ponce y Cía, 1929), 140–45. On the general strike of 21 and 22 May, see Korzeniewicz, "Labor Politics of Radicalism," 4–5. The syndicalist union federation, the Unión Obrera Local—affiliated with the national federation, the U.S.A.—took a leadership role in the general strike, but evidence suggests that the syndicalists were latecomers to the conflict. See *Democracia*, 18 May 1928, 1.

100. *La Nación*, 29 May 1928, 5; *Democracia*, 29 May 1928, 1.

101. Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1928*, 145–46.

102. Caballero, *Discursos*, 505–6. On the refinery strike, see *Democracia*, 20 June 1928, 1.

103. On the tramway conflict, see *Democracia*, 27 June 1928, 1; 3 July 1928, 1; 7 June 1928, 1. *La Capital*, 7 July 1928, 4; 30 July 1928, 5; 2 August 1928, 5. In this conflict, hostility toward the foreign-owned company led many anti-Caballerista observers to embrace the workers' cause. See, for example, *Boletín de la Tarde*, 14 July 1928, 3.

104. Caballero, *Discursos*, 506–9; Korzeniewicz, "Labor Politics of Radicalism," 12–14.

105. Korzeniewicz, "Labor Politics of Radicalism," 15–17.

106. *Orientación*, 20 June 1928, 3.

107. *Ibid.*, 8 July 1928, 1.

108. *La Capital*, 14 July 1928, 4–5; *Boletín Oficial de la Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario* 17, no. 396 (15 July 1928): 19–26.

109. Quoted in Korzeniewicz, "Labor Politics of Radicalism," 19. The translation is his.

110. *Voz del Comercio*, 21 March 1929, 3.

111. *Boletín Oficial de la Bolsa de Comercio*, 20–21.

112. On the shutdown of the legislature, see Legislatura de Santa Fe, *Antecedentes de un caso constitucional: Año 1928* (Rosario: La Velocidad, n.d.). *Democracia* claimed that

Caballero pressured the members of Gómez Cello's cabinet into signing the decree closing the legislature. See *Democracia*, 20 June 1928, 1.

113. *Democracia*, 29 May 1928, 1.

114. *Ibid.*, 6 June 1928, 1.

115. *Ibid.*, 27 June 1928, 1.

116. *Ibid.*, 3 July 1928, 1; see also 13 July 1928, 1.

117. *Ibid.*, 18 July 1928, 1.

118. Quoted in *ibid.*, 21 July 1928, 1.

119. Mazza, *Discursos*, 80–81.

120. *Democracia*, 18 July 1928, 1.

121. The new municipal electoral law gave the vote to any foreign male who had resided in Rosario for at least two years and who either practiced a “liberal profession” or paid at least fifty pesos in annual city or provincial taxes, or who was married to an Argentine woman and had at least one Argentine child. Similarly, women could vote if they had university degrees or paid more than fifty pesos in taxes. See Provincia de Santa Fe, *Ley Orgánica de las Municipalidades* (No. 2147) y *Decreto reglamentario de las elecciones a efectuarse el último domingo de Abril de 1928* (N.p.: n.d.).

122. Computed from raw election results in *La Capital*, 17 November 1928, 5.

123. Korzeniewicz argues that this judgment “bore a measure of truth” and that Caballero's support was limited even among workers. In Korzeniewicz, “Labor Politics of Radicalism,” 19–20.

124. *La Capital*, 20 October 1928, 4. On the electric company strike see *La Capital*, 9 November 1928, 5.

125. *Ibid.*, 24 August 1928, 5.

126. *La Tarde*, 6 August 1928, 1.

127. *El Imparcial*, 21 September 1928, 2.

128. *La Capital*, 8 May 1928, 5.

129. For the November turnout, see *ibid.*, 17 November 1928, 5.

130. *Ibid.*

131. *La Capital*, 16 November 1928, 4; 17 November 1928, 5.

132. Korzeniewicz, “Labor Politics of Radicalism,” 20.

133. Bolsa de Comercio del Rosario, *Memoria: Año 1928*, 173–76.

134. *Ibid.*, 176–77.

135. *La Capital*, 11 December 1928, 5.

136. *Ibid.*, 5 December 1928, 5.

137. *Ibid.*, 4 December 1928, 6.

138. *Ibid.*, 12 December 1928, 6; Caballero's resignation was not officially accepted until February 1929, but responsibility had been informally delegated to Arturo Gandolla, one of Caballero's former underlings. See *ibid.*, 23 February 1929, 4.

139. Caballero, *Discursos*, 500, 519.

140. *La Capital*, 17 January 1929, 5. On the tramway strike, see also *La Capital*, 15 January 1929, 4; 26 January 1929, 5.

141. *Ibid.*, 2 August 1929, 5.

142. *Ibid.*, 23 August 1929, 5; 24 August 1929, 5.

143. *Boletín Oficial de la Bolsa de Comercio* 18, no. 423 (30 August 1929): 10–12.
144. *Boletín Oficial de la Bolsa de Comercio* 18, no. 421 (31 July 1929): 17.
145. *La Capital*, 5 August 1929, 3. This was hardly the first time the newspaper argued the need for labor legislation. See, for example, *La Capital*, 14 December 1928, 4; 5 January 1929, 4; 24 February 1929, 4; 31 July 1929, 4. This call was echoed by other newspapers as well; see *Democracia*, 6 October 1928, 1.
146. PDP speaker Mario Antelo, quoted in *La Capital*, 10 November 1929, 5.
147. An anonymous Caballerista, quoted in *ibid.*.
148. For the election results, see *La Capital*, 15 November 1929, 6. The Núcleo received 20 percent, while the PDP received 33 percent of the total votes cast in Rosario.
149. On the fusion negotiations, see *La Capital*, 23 January 1930, 4; 10 February 1930, 5; 15 February 1930, 4–5; 17 February 1930, 5. On the breakdown of these negotiations, see *La Capital*, 18 February 1930, 5.
150. *Ibid.*, 23 February 1930, 4–5; 26 February 1930, 4.
151. *Ibid.*, 27 February 1930, 5.
152. The UCR-CN (ex-Núcleo) received 26 percent. See *La Capital*, 11 March 1930, 5.

Conclusion

1. For these various causes of the 1930 coup, see David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 257–65; Anne L. Potter, “The Failure of Democracy in Argentina 1916–1930: An Institutional Perspective,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 13, no. 1 (1981): 83–109; Robert A. Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1928–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1969).
2. *La Capital*, 7 September 1930, 4. For similar statements in *La Nación*, see Ricardo Sidicaro, *La política mirada desde arriba: Las ideas del diario La Nación, 1909–1989* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1993), 117–18.
3. *La Capital*, 8 September 1930, 3.
4. *Ibid.*, 9 September 1930, 4.
5. Jeremy Adelman, “Reflections on Argentine Labour and the Rise of Perón,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 11, no. 3 (1992): 252. The classic structuralist account of Peronism is Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1965). Among the major works in the revisionist vein is Juan Carlos Torre, *La vieja guardia sindical y Perón: sobre los orígenes del peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1990).
6. In a groundbreaking essay written over two decades ago, Ernesto Laclau suggested that Peronism could best be understood through an analysis of identity construction and discursive transformation in the preceding decades. See Laclau, “Towards a Theory of Populism,” in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*, by Laclau (London: NLB, 1977), 143–98. Mariano Plotkin has recently suggested that scholars need to follow the lead suggested by Laclau; see Plotkin, “The Changing Perceptions of Peronism,” in *Peronism and Argentina*, ed. James Brennan (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), 40–41. For a similar effort to construct a discourse-based history of working-class formation in a very different context, see William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*:

The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

7. On these aspects of Peronist discourse, see Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5–40.

8. *Ibid.*, 50.

9. Other pro-labor Radical movements in the Argentine provinces included Córdoba's "Red Radicalism" and Mendoza's Lencinismo. See Gardenia Vidal, "El fracaso de un programa político definido: El radicalismo rojo de Córdoba (1916–1922)," in *El reformismo en contrapunto: Los procesos de modernización en el Río de la Plata (1890–1930)* (Montevideo: Centro Latinoamericano de Economía Humana [CLAEH], 1989), 51–79; Pablo Lacoste, *La Unión Cívica Radical en Mendoza y en la Argentina (1890–1946): Aportes para el estudio de la inestabilidad política en la Argentina* (Mendoza: Ediciones Culturales de Mendoza, 1994).

10. Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, 234.

11. See, for example, *La Epoca*, 3 January 1928, 1; 11 January 1928, 2; 21 October 1927, 1.

12. The National Labor Department recorded only fifty-eight strikes in Buenos Aires in 1927, the lowest number in the twenty years since the agency began keeping statistics. Just one year later, in the year in which Yrigoyen regained the presidency, the porteño strike total more than doubled to 135, and the figure remained above one hundred for the rest of Yrigoyen's term. See Ricardo Gaudio and Jorge Pilone, "El desarrollo de la negociación colectiva durante la etapa de modernización industrial en la Argentina," in *La formación del sindicalismo peronista*, ed. Juan Carlos Torre (Buenos Aires: Legasa, 1988), 28.

13. Leandro H. Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero, *Sectores populares, cultura y política: Buenos Aires en la entreguerra* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995), esp. 94–100.

14. Silvia Sigal and Juan Carlos Torre, "Una reflexión en torno a los movimientos laborales en América Latina," in *Fuerza de trabajo y movimientos laborales en América Latina*, ed. Rubén Katzmann and José Luis Reyna (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1979), 145.

15. Waldo Ansaldi, "Profetas de cambios terribles: Acerca de la debilidad de la democracia argentina, 1912–1945," in *Representaciones inconclusas: Las clases, los actores y los discursos de la memoria, 1912–1946*, ed. Ansaldi et al. (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1995), 39.

16. The Argentine case, then, would seem to pose a sharp contrast to nineteenth-century Mexico, as analyzed by Florencia Mallon, in *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

17. Hilda Sabato, "Citizenship, Political Participation and the Formation of the Public Sphere in Buenos Aires 1850s–1880s," *Past and Present* 136 (1992): 162.

18. Laclau, "Towards a Theory," 176–90.

19. *Ibid.*, 161–63. For a similar argument, see Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 6–7.

20. Peter H. Smith, "The Breakdown of Democracy in Argentina, 1916–30," in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978), 3–27. For a recent, qualified endorsement of Smith's interpretation see Daniel James, "Uncertain Legitimacy: The Social and Political Restraints Underlying the Emergence of Democracy in Argentina, 1890–1930," in *The Social Construction of Democracy, 1870–1990*, ed. George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

21. On elites' hostility to Yrigoyen's use of the budget, see Tulio Halperín Donghi, "The Buenos Aires Landed Class and the Shape of Argentine Politics (1820–1930)," in *Agrarian Structure and Political Power: Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America*, ed. Evelyne Huber and Frank Safford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 64.

22. Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, its History and its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 70–86.

23. Sidicaro, *La política*, 99.

24. Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Counterrevolution in Argentina, 1900–1932: The Argentina Patriotic League* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 203; Roberto Etchepareborda, "Antecedentes de la crisis de 1930," in *La segunda presidencia de Yrigoyen*, by Gabriel del Mazo and Etchepareborda (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984), 114.

25. Ronaldo Munck, "Introduction: A Thin Democracy," *Latin American Perspectives* 24, no. 6 (1997): 14. On the self-interested enthusiasm for democracy of contemporary Argentine elites, see Carlos Acuña, "Intereses empresarios, dictadura y democracia en la Argentina actual," in *La nueva matriz política argentina*, ed. Acuña (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1995). Acuña argues that this elite commitment to democracy is long term.

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Index

Abalos, José Benjamín, 187
academic professionals, in politics, 54–56.

See also education, public

La Acción, 55, 130

Adelman, Jeremy, 40

agricultural labor, conflict with, 80

Alberdi, Juan Bautista, 17–21; *Bases y puntos de partida*, 17, 18, 214n. 3; economic growth, 18, 214n. 6; evolutionary logic, 29, 40; immigration, 17–18, 21, 214n. 6; non-pluralist democracy, influence on, 15, 17–19, 21; progressive authoritarianism, 18, 22; racism of, 17; suffrage, limits of, 16, 18–19

Aldao, Ricardo: *civismo* as masculine, 35;
Dissident factionism, 133; labor reforms, 169; 1924 election, 154, 164; and the UCR's breakup, 173–74

Alem, Leandro N., 22, 63

Alvear, Marcelo de, 170, 173, 245n. 65

Amante, Angel, 73

Amuchástegui, Nicolás, 81, 197

anarchist union movement: appeal of, to workers, 24, 45, 47–48, 78, 152, 220n. 9, 221n. 20; and Caballerismo, 147–48, 147–49, 150, 185; Casa del Pueblo, 47; corporatist attack on, 140–41, 145, 146, 239n. 74; decline, 153–54, 241n. 120; on democracy and parties, 78; disillusionment with, 157, 165, 182; emergence of, 3, 23, 45, 47; FOLR/FOR, 47–48, 84, 86, 88–89, 116–17; neoindividualist faction, 48; resurgence, 1920s, 147–54; working class commitment to, 47–48, 152; working-class identity, view of, 78–79; and Yrigoyenismo, 180.
See also labor conflict

Antille, Armando, 173, 174, 176

Antipersonalistas, 173, 245n. 65

Araya, Agustín, 143, 145

Araya, Ramón, 165–66

Archetti, Eduardo, 162

Argentine Patriotic League, 137, 139–41, 153, 166

Argentine Regional Workers Federation (FORA), 47

Argentine Sugar Refinery, 46, 47

Argonz, Ricardo, 171–72

Arribillaga, Tobías: background, 64; hardens toward unions, 136; labor legislation, 94, 172–73; as mayor, 132, 136; municipal electoral reform, 97

Arroyito neighborhood, 158, 159

Asociación del Trabajo, 153

Barreto, B. L., 109, 231n. 4

Barrio Calzada, 158

Barrio Godoy, 158, 159

Barrio Mendoza, 158

Bases y puntos de partida (Alberdi), 17, 18, 214n. 3

Bello, Julio, 64

Bertotto, José Guillermo: duel controversy, 129, 237n. 39; labor legislation, 170; 1916 election, 106–7; 1918 election, 60, 125–26; 1926 election, 177; in Núcleo, 187; politicians' pedagogical role, 31; as Socialist, 106, 233n. 57; as Yrigoyenista, 176, 181.
See also *Democracia*

Bialet Massé, Juan, 49, 69, 222n. 25, 225n. 6

Bolsa de Comercio: as elite club, 51; jobs program commission, 99; on Rosario strikes, frequency of, 192; strike intervention efforts, 49–50, 87, 115, 116, 184, 185–86, 190, 246n. 99

Bonacossa, Italo, 116

Bordabehere, Enzo, 35, 36, 128

Borges, Jorge Luis, 162

Bourdieu, Pierre, 7, 61

Bravo, Mario, 86

Buenos Aires, compared to Rosario, 137–38, 202–3, 249n. 12

Caballerismo: and the anarchist movement, 147–49, 150, 185; fear of, 75–76, 128–30, 228nn. 55, 57; and legislative stagnation, 93, 95–96, 98; undermines democracy, 137

Caballero, Ricardo: anti-anarchism, 148–49; apex of political power, 114–15; ascendance, early twentieth century, 64–68; ascendance, 1914, 95–96; ascendance, 1925, 174, 175–76, 179, 183, 188–90; caudillismo, identification with, 65, 68, 108, 111; as chief of police, 183, 191, 247n. 138; on *criollos* vs. foreign plutocrats, 68–69, 70–71, 74–75, 112, 124, 236n. 21; decline, 1913, 88, 90, 101; decline, mid-1920s, 134, 135–36, 148–51; decline, 1928, 186–87; democratic vision, nostalgic, 65–66, 67, 74–75, 175; as Dissident leader, 95–96, 123, 130–32, 237nn. 43, 46, 238n. 47; duel controversy, 129, 237n. 39; fear of, 75–76, 128–30, 228nn. 55, 57; on gauchos, 71, 74–75; on immigrants, 68, 69, 70–71, 124, 236n. 21; Liga del Sur, attacks on, 69, 70; on

- masculinity, 65, 67–68, 76; 1912 election, 68–69, 74–77; 1913 strikes, role in, 78, 80, 86–87, 88, 89; 1914 election, 101; 1916 election, 111–14, 234n. 67, 235n. 72; 1917 strikes, role in, 122–23, 236n. 13; 1918 election, 123–24, 236n. 22; 1920 election, 134, 148; 1926 election, 170, 177; 1928 strikes, 183–85, 186; 1930 election, 194; on pension law, 174–75; uniqueness of, 201–2, 249n. 9; Yrigoyen, early support for, 114, 235n. 75; as Yrigoyenista, 174, 175–76, 179, 183, 188–90. *See also* Dissidents; Unión Cívica Radical (UCR); Yrigoyenistas
- Cabanillas, Domingo, 64
- Calderón, Luis, 85
- Cámara Sindical, 49–50
- La Capital*: anti-Dissident attacks, 128–29, 237n. 37; Caballero, 69, 122–23; *civismo* as masculine, 35; classless patriotism, optimism about, 119, 235n. 2; failure of education in nation-building, 138–39; gauchos, 76, 101; immorality, working-class, 167; Infante, 80, 82; intellect, appeal to, 102, 103; labor law reform, 92, 192, 248n. 145; Menchaca's administration, 100; military coup, 1930, 196–97; municipal electoral reform, 98; national identity problem, 31–32; 1912 strike, 1–2; 1913 strikes, 82, 83–84, 85, 88; 1917 strikes, 122–23; 1918 election, 123–24, 126–27; 1920 election, 134; 1928 strikes, 181; nonpluralist democracy, commitment to, 2, 3, 31; nonpluralist democracy, disenchantment with, 136–37; organic parties, 39; partisanship, 38, 39, 142; pension law protest, 166–67, 244n. 43; Radical party, alleged decline, 101; strikes, political manipulation of, 122–23, 236n. 13; unions, acceptance of, 165; voter apathy, 156. *See also* Liga del Sur; Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)
- Capmany, Francisco, 64
- Cardarelli, Emilio, 140, 223n. 44
- Carlés, Manuel, 152, 166
- Casa del Pueblo, 47
- Catholic Church reformers, 25, 222n. 25
- caudillos and caudillismo*: Alberdi's and Sarriento's attacks on, 17, 19, 215n. 18; Argentines' predisposition toward, 17, 215n. 20; Caballero's identification with, 65, 68, 108, 111; denunciation of, 33, 108–9, 111, 233nn. 54, 56–57; González on, 66; persistence of, in clientelism, 90–91, 109–11, 231n. 1, 234n. 59. *See also* *criollismo*; *criollos*; *gauchos*
- Central Argentine Railroad (FCCA), 46, 68
- Centro Unión de Almaceneros (CUA), 57
- Cepeda, Juan: on anarchists, 143–44; becomes interim governor, 134; and clientelism, 109; corporatist response, 143–44; 1924 election, 154, 163, 164; partisanship, public vs. private, 231n. 4
- El Chacho, 74
- chief of police. *See* police chief, office of
- cinema, 160
- citizens, ideal: education, necessity of, 16, 18–19, 20, 39–41; and Greca's new patriotism, 33–35; as manly, 16, 35. *See also* masculinity; nonpluralist democracy
- city council, 79; and *criollismo*, opposition to, 76; elite backgrounds of, 51, 53–54, 223nn. 43, 44; in municipal electoral reform, 97, 232n. 26; 1913 strikes, 81–83, 85; party affiliations, 54, 57, 79, 223n. 44
- civic republicanism, defined, 8
- civismo*: defined, 35; education, necessity of, 39–41; as intellectual, 36–37; as masculine, 16, 35; and municipal electoral reform, 96–97; and the 1914 election, 103; and the 1916 election, 118. *See also* citizens, ideal
- clientelism, persistence of, 90–91, 109–11, 231n. 1, 234n. 59. *See also* *caudillos* and *caudillismo*
- La Coalición, 63, 77
- Cogorno, Germán, 55
- Colombres, Gervasio, 85
- Committee for National Defense, 138, 239n. 66
- committees, political party, 57–60
- communists, 151, 159, 189, 190, 223n. 43
- El Comunista*, 150, 152–53
- conventillos*, 46–47, 221n. 16
- corporatism: Argentine Patriotic League, 137, 139–41; Committee for National Defense, 138, 239n. 66; Federación Gremial de Comercio e Industria, 141–42, 184, 185–86, 190, 239n. 75; in government, 143–47; and nonpolitical working-class identity, 140–41, 142
- Correa, Francisco, 81–82, 229n. 79
- criollismo*: city government's opposition to, 76; Italians' participation in, 73–74, 227n. 42; literature of, 71–72, 73–74, 227n. 44; and the López murder, 178; and national identity, 73, 77, 227n. 44; origins of, 66, 226n. 15; popularity of, 72–73; working-class interests, linked to, 199. *See also* Caballero, Ricardo; *gauchos*

- criollo* circuses, 72
- criollos*: Caballero on, 68–69, 70–71, 74–75; census figures on, 70; defining, problem of, 71; and 1913 strikes, 86, 230nn. 106–7; vs. foreign plutocrats, 68–69, 70–71, 74–75, 97, 112, 124, 236n. 21
- Crónica*, 164
- CUA (Centro Unión de Almaceneros), 57
- Culaciati, Miguel, 59, 94, 117, 235n. 83
- Dall'Orso, Manuel, 58, 59
- De la Puente, Elías 59, 179
- De la Torre, Lisandro 38, 39, 105, 181, 234n. 59
- Dell'Oro, Bernardo, 55
- Democracia*, 55; Caballero, 183, 186; labor coverage, 164; López murder, 178–79; 1926 election, 177; and Núcleo, 187
- democracy: Alberdi's and Sarmiento's views of, 21; civic republicanism transition to liberalism, 8–9; class identity formation in, 7; French version, 9; nonpluralist (*see* nonpluralist democracy); North American version, 9, 17, 18–19, 20; pluralist, 8–9
- Democracy in America* (Tocqueville), 17
- deputies, elite backgrounds of, 51, 51, 52–53, 223nn. 32, 34
- El Día Que Me Quieras* (film), 161
- El Diario*, 134
- Dissidents, 104; anti-clientelist rhetoric, 108–9, 233n. 56; disintegration of, 130–34, 237nn. 43, 46, 238nn. 47, 53–54; emergence of, 95, 103–5; and legislative stagnation, 95–96, 98; 1916 election, 108–9, 112–13, 113, 114, 233n. 56, 234n. 71, 235n. 72; 1917 strikes, 122; 1918 election, 124–27, 125; 1920 election, 134, 135, 135; platform, 105; political alliances of, 112–13, 115; and Yrigoyen, support for, 114, 235n. 75
- Domenech, José, 121
- Don Segundo Sombra* (Güiraldes), 66
- duel controversy, 129, 237n. 39
- Echesortu neighborhood, 158, 159
- economy, Argentine: Alberdi and Sarmiento on, 18, 19, 214n. 6; Caballero on, 65–66; downturn, 1914, 98–99; export economy, 43–44; during Great Depression, 196; growth of, 43, 122; import substitution industrialization, 122, 203
- education, civic: necessary for *civismo*, 39–41; necessary for suffrage, 18–19
- education, public: failure to produce *civismo*, 138–39, 142–43; opportunities for, 56; to promote national identity, 19–20, 24–25, 32–33; vocational, 142–43
- election of 1912: Caballeristas' role in, 64, 68–69, 74–77; fairness of, 29–30; and the national identity problem, 76–77; party platforms, 63–64; results, 30, 77, 228n. 62; universal rhetoric of, 63–64
- election of 1914, 99–103, 233n. 36
- election of 1916, 105–14; anti-caudillismo rhetoric, 108–9, 111, 233nn. 54, 56–57; Caballerista rhetoric, 111–12; campaign rallies, 110–11, 234n. 65; caudillismo, persistence of, 108–11, 234nn. 59, 64; party platforms, similarity of, 105–6; politics of principles, PDP's, 106–8; results, 113, 113–14, 234n. 71, 235n. 73
- election of 1918, 123–27, 236n. 22
- election of 1920, 134–35, 135, 238n. 59
- election of 1924, 154, 163
- election of 1926, 170, 176–77, 178, 244n. 57
- election of 1928, 179–80
- election of 1928, municipal, 188–90
- election of 1929, municipal, 193, 248n. 148
- election of 1930, 193–94
- electorate. *See* voters, Argentine
- elite reformers, early twentieth century, 22–29; evolutionary logic of, 29; and national identity, 23–26; nonpluralism, belief in, 26–27; reformist liberals, 25; and the Sáenz Peña Law, 23, 25–26, 27–29; schisms within, 22–23
- elites, Rosarino, 50–61; Caballerismo, fear of, 75–76, 128–30, 228nn. 55, 57; capitalism, disenchantment with, 145–46; central districts, concentrated in, 58; civic republicanism, belief in, 9–10; club memberships of, 51, 51–54; corporatist response (*see* corporatism); hegemonic project of, 9–10, 30, 205; immigrant composition of, 11; monopoly on power, 50, 52, 59–61; and the national identity problem, 31–32; nonpluralist democracy, disillusionment with, 126–27, 136–42, 147, 165–66, 207–8, 235n. 4; politics of principles, belief in, 37–39, 40; pro-labor social reformers, 49–50; unions, acceptance of, 165; upward mobility into (*see* upward mobility); working class, failure to appeal to, 3, 41, 63–64, 100; on working class, legitimacy of, 48–49. *See also* nonelites, Rosarino; nonpluralist democracy
- Elizalde, Francisco: as alternative to Caballero, 133, 238n. 53; challenges Caballero, 131–33,

- 237n. 43, 46, 238n. 47; 1916 election, 105, 112; resignation as vice-governor, 114; and Yrigoyen, 114
- Elizalde, Martín, 58–59
- Elizaldistas, 104, 132, 134, 135, 135
- Falcón, Ricardo, 49
- FCCA (Central Argentine Railroad), 46, 68
- Federación Gremial de Comercio e Industria, 141–42, 184, 185–86, 190, 239n. 75
- Ferrarotti, Juan Luis, 54, 60, 94, 97, 148, 160
- Ferreya, Enrique, 131, 223n. 44, 237n. 46
- Ferri, Jorge, 169
- Figuerola Alcorta, José, 23
- FOLR (Rosarino Local Workers Federation), 47–48, 84, 86, 88–89, 116–17
- FORA (Argentine Regional Workers Federation), 47
- Francioni, Isaac, 33
- free mandate, 31, 217n. 57
- Gálvez, Manuel, 24, 66, 216n. 25
- gambling, 167, 244nn. 45–46
- Gardel, Carlos, 160, 161
- gauchocracy, 108
- El gaucho Martín Fierro* (Hernández), 72, 228n. 55
- gauchos, 71–76; glorification of, 71–74, 75, 76; literature of, 71–72, 73–74, 227n. 44; prejudice toward, 17, 20, 71, 101, 228nn. 55, 57. *See also criollismo; criollos; racism*
- Generation of 1837
- Generation of 1837, 16–17, 19, 20, 214n. 3, 215n. 16
- The girl from the slums, (*La muchacha del arrabal*, Ferreyra), 160
- “Giuseppe, el zapatero” (tango), 161
- Gómez, Indalecio, 27
- Gómez Cello, Pedro, 179, 181, 183, 186, 193, 194
- González, Joaquín V., 25, 28–29, 66, 217n. 57, 217nn. 44, 48
- Greca, Alcides, 55; labor law reform attempts, 92–96; municipal electoral reform, 97; “new patriotism” of, 33–35, 218n. 65, 228n. 57; 1916 election, 108; in Núcleo, 187; as Opposition Radical, 163–64; politics of ideas, 37; as Yrigoyenista, 176, 180–81
- Güiraldes, Ricardo, 66
- Gutiérrez, Eduardo, 72
- Gutiérrez, Leandro, 203
- Habermas, Jürgen, 8
- Halperín Donghi, Tulio, 18, 20
- Los Hermanos Barrientos* (Amante), 73–74
- Hernández, José, 72
- Herrera, Antonio, 81, 85, 229n. 88, 230n. 102
- Hidalgo, Bartolomé, 71
- Higonnet, Patrice, 9
- Hormiga Negra, 74, 76
- immigrants and immigration: in anarchist movement, 24, 45, 141, 220n. 9; Caballero on, 68, 69, 70–71, 124; and democratization, effect on, 2, 16, 23–24, 216n. 25; double fatherland of, 32; during economic growth, late nineteenth century, 43–44; as elites, 69–70; Generation of 1837 supports, 17–18, 19–20, 214n. 6; heterogeneity of, 44–45; nationalization of, 24–25, 32–33; 1913 strikes, 86, 230nn. 106–7; occupations of, 44–45, 69–70; Patriotic League’s view of, 141, 239n. 74; population statistics, 44, 70, 219n. 3; and suffrage, 1, 5; as unskilled laborers, 24, 44. *See also national identity; working class*, Rosario
- Indians, prejudice toward, 17, 20
- Infante, J. Daniel: budget proposal, 80, 81; on Culaciati, 235n. 83; jobs program commission, 1914, 99, 232n. 32; 1913 strikes, 81–82; 1916 election, 112, 233n. 56, 235n. 75; resignation, 82–83; supports workers’ interests, 79–81
- intellect, appeal to: and Greca’s new patriotism, 33–34; Liga del Sur, 102–3; Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), 106–8; and virile *civismo*, 36–37. *See also politics of principles*
- intellectuals, in politics, 55–56
- Italians, 45, 73–74, 227n. 42
- Jews, violence toward, 137, 138
- Jockey Club, 51, 52, 167
- Johns, Michael, 44, 51
- Juan Machain incident, 95, 104
- Juan Moreira* (Gutiérrez), 72
- Juárez Celman, Miguel, 22
- Justo, Juan B., 86
- Krausism, 26
- Labor Association (Asociación del Trabajo), 153
- labor conflict: arbitration tribunals proposed, 49; beginning of, late nineteenth century, 43, 47; Buenos Aires, compared to Rosario,

- 137–38, 202–3, 249n. 12; early-twentieth-century strikes, 24, 47, 48, 49–50; more frequent in Rosario, 192, 202; 1912, with tenant farmers, 80; 1912 strikes, 1, 80–81; 1913 strikes (*see* strikes of 1913); 1915 strike, 115–17; 1917 strikes, 120–22; 1918–1919 strikes, 127–29, 137–38, 139, 236n. 7; 1920 strikes, 144; 1921 strikes, 151, 152, 153; 1922–1924 strikes, 153, 159, 241n. 118; 1928 strikes, 181–86, 188–89, 190–91, 246nn. 99, 103; 1929 strikes, 191–92; and nonpluralist democracy, effect on, 16; pension law protest, 1924, 159, 166–67, 174–75, 244n. 43; repression of, increased, 128, 137, 144, 153, 157; seasonality of, 237n. 31; subsidence of, 95, 157; Tragic Week, 137; violence of (*see* labor violence). *See also* anarchist union movement; immigrants and immigration; working class, Rosario
- labor congress, 1923, 140n. 97, 144, 146–47
- labor law reform: Aldao's, 1926, 169, 170–73; early twentieth century, 49–50, 222n. 25; and fear of class politics, 93, 95–96, 169, 170, 172, 193, 244n. 55; Greca's, 1913, 92–96, 98; 1929 call for, 192–93
- labor violence: Lallana murder, 181–82, 246n. 92; 1913 strikes, 85, 230n. 96; 1917–1923 strikes, 120–21, 128, 137, 151, 236n. 5; 1928 strikes, 181, 182
- Laclau, Ernesto, 206
- Lallana, Luisa, 181–82, 246n. 92
- land distribution, 20, 105, 215n. 18
- Leandro N. Alem Club, 63
- legislature, provincial: elite dominance of, 51, 51, 52–53, 54, 223nn. 32, 34; labor law reforms (*see* labor law reform); shut down by Gómez Cello, 186, 246n. 112; stagnation in, 90, 91, 92, 95–96, 98; and suffrage, municipal election, 96–98, 188; working class, concern for, 92, 94, 98
- Lehmann, Rodolfo: fires Ferreyra, 131, 237n. 46; 1916 election, 105, 112, 113; resignation, 134; and Yrigoyen, 114
- Lejarza, Ferminín, 36, 134, 241n. 107
- Ley de Defensa Social, 24
- liberalism, 8, 9
- Liga del Sur, 104; becomes PDP, 105; Caballero's attacks on, 69, 70; city councilmen, 54, 57, 223n. 44; elite dominance of, 52–53, 58; intellect, appeal to, 102–3; and labor reform, Greca's, 95, 96; and municipal electoral reform, 97, 232n. 26; 1912 election, 30, 75–76; 1913 strikes, 83, 85, 86, 87; 1914 election, 101–3; nonelites in, 57, 58–59; platform, 52–53, 63, 96; political committee members, 57, 58–59; politics of principles rhetoric, 101–3; upward mobility within, 50; workers, attempts to appeal to, 75–76; workers' identity, rhetoric on, 79. *See also* *La Capital*; partisanship; Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)
- Longo y Argentó, 72, 227n. 38
- Lo Valvo, José, 55, 223n. 44
- Lugones, Leopoldo, 66, 208, 243n. 41
- "Lunés" (tango), 161
- Machain (Juan) incident, 95, 104
- Martínez Cuitiño, Darío, 58, 59
- masculinity: of Caballarismo, 65, 67–68, 76; of caudillos, 65; of *civismo*, 16, 35–36; of reason and intellect, 36–37
- mass culture, mid-1920s, 159–63
- Matadero neighborhood, 63
- Matienzo, José Nicolás, 25
- mayor, office of, 51, 53, 79, 105
- Mazza, Alberto, 187–88
- Menchaca, Manuel: appoints Infante, 79; Caballero, break with, 87–88, 95, 101; fires Culaciati, 117, 235n. 83; fires Rodríguez, 104; free mandate, belief in, 217n. 57; moves against Caballeristas, 104; municipal electoral reform, 96–97; 1912 election, 68, 77; 1916 election, 108; 1913 strikes, 87; 1915 strike, 116, 117–18; nonpluralist democracy, belief in, 30–31, 217n. 57; partisanship, excessive, 91–92; tax increases criticized, 100; voters, uneducated, 40
- El Mensajero*, 79, 80, 83
- merchants, in politics, 57, 58. *See also* Bolsa de Comercio
- military coup, 1930, 4, 196–97
- Monaco, Francisco, 151, 227n. 38
- Monos y Monadas*, 46–47
- Moore, Barrington, 7
- Moreira, Juan, 74
- Mosca, Enrique: as Antipersonalist, 173; Caballero, alliance with, 131, 148, 240n. 103; corporatist response, 144–46; education, vocational, 143; labor congress, 1923, 144, 146–47; 1920 election, 136
- movementism, defined, 4
- movies, 160
- La muchacha del arrabal* (The girl from the slums, Ferreyra), 160
- municipal elections, 1928/1929, 188–90, 193, 248n. 148

- municipal workers union, 150–51, 241n. 107
 mutual aid societies, 45, 220n. 12
- national identity: and *criollismo*, 73, 77, 227n. 44; and education, Sarmiento on, 19–20; electoral reform, promoted through, 24–25, 216n. 25; failure to achieve, 138–39; and the gauchos, 73, 227n. 44; new patriotism, Greca's, 33–35; and nonpluralist democracy, 2, 16; pro-work discourse, Greca's, 33–35; in Rosario, 31–32. *See also* immigrants and immigration; working-class identity
- Nationalist Radicals, 104; Caballero/Mosca talks, 131, 237n. 43; 1918 election, 124, 125; 1920 election, 134, 135, 148
- nativism, Caballero's, 68–69, 70–71
- Neumayer, Carlos, 59
- newspapers: Caballero on, 67; partisan politics, frustration with, 142; regular labor coverage, 164–65; on working-class interests, legitimacy of, 49. *See also specific newspapers*
- 1905 uprising, 65
- nonelites, Rosarino: academic professionals, 54–56; in districts nine and ten, 58–59; Liga del Sur/PDP, 57, 58–59; in political party committees, 57–60; Radical, 57–58, 59–60; retailers and tradesmen, 56–57; upward mobility, limits on, 59–61. *See also* elites, Rosarino; upward mobility
- nonpluralist democracy: Alberdi's influence on, 15, 17–19, 21; based on civic republicanism, 8; belief in, after 1930 coup, 197–98; belief in, early reformers', 26–29, 30–31; *los ciudadanos*, concept of, 2; class-neutrality of, 2–3; disillusionment with, 126–27, 136–42, 145, 147, 165–66, 207–8, 235n. 4; failure of, 196, 204–10; and the incomplete list, 27–28; and labor reform law, 93, 96; and masculinity, appeal to, 35–37; and the national identity problem, 2, 16, 23–26, 216n. 25; party representation in, 38–40, 205–6; and Peronism, 4–5, 200–201, 203; and politics of principles, 37–39, 93; Sarmiento's influence on, 15, 21; and social justice, contradiction with, 204. *See also* partisanship; politics of principles
- Noriega, Néstor, 121, 122, 125, 131, 132–33, 236n. 8
- Núcleo (UCR-CN), 104; becomes the UCR-CN, 194; emergence of, 187–88; 1928/1929 municipal elections, 188–90, 193; 1930 election, 193–94
- Núñez, Ricardo, 84, 87–88, 112, 234n. 67
- Opposition Radicals, 104, 163–64, 176, 178, 243n. 33
- Ordóñez, Manuel, 192
- organic parties, 39
- Orientación*, 182, 185, 246n. 93
- Paganini, Carlos, 84, 85
- Palacios Law, 92
- Pampa Soul, 73
- Pandolfo, Pío, 171
- Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN), 22, 23, 36–37
- Partido Democrática Progresista (PDP). *See* Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)
- partisanship: demagoguery, problem of, 140, 239n. 72; disillusionment with, 165–66; and labor reform, Greca's, 92–96; Menchaca on, 91–92; and movementism, 4; and nonpluralist democracy, contradiction with, 38–40, 205–6; party committees, 57–60; provincial factions, 1912–1930, 104; public vs. private, 92, 231n. 4; recent scholarship on, 6; and working-class identity formation, 7, 205
- Patriotic League, 137, 139–41, 153, 166
- patriotism. *See* national identity
- patronage. *See* clientelism, persistence of
- payadores*, 72
- PDP (Progressive Democratic Party). *See* Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)
- Pellegrini, Carlos, 23, 25
- pension law protest, 1924, 159, 166–67, 174–75, 244n. 43
- Peronism, 198–204; and labor unions, 5, 198; and nonpluralist democracy, failure of, 4–5, 200–201, 203; and working-class identity, evolution of, 199–200
- pluralist democracy, 8, 9. *See also* nonpluralist democracy
- Podestá, José, 72
- police chief, office of, 51, 53, 79, 223n. 40
- police strike, 1918, 127–28
- politics of principles: as a democratic vision, 37–39; early reformers on, 26–27, 37; and Greca's labor law reform, 93; 1914 election, 100–103; 1916 election, 105–8
- popular culture, mid-1920s, 159–63
- Popular University, 143, 240n. 86
- port workers' strike, 1915, 115–17
- press. *See* newspapers
- Prieto, Adolfo, 72, 73
- professionals, in politics, 54–56

- Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), 104;
alliances with merchants, 57; anti-Dissident
attacks, 1918, 128–29; and clientelism, 109,
234n. 59; on Culaciati's firing, 117; emer-
gence of, 105; intellect, appeal to, 106–8;
1916 election, 105–8, 113, 113, 234n. 71; 1918
election, 123–24, 125, 125–26; 1920 election,
134–35, 135; 1924 election, 164; 1926 elec-
tion, 176, 177, 178; platform, 105–6; and
the Socialist Party, 233n. 57; Yrigoyenista
defectors from, 176, 181. *See also* Liga del
Sur; partisanship
- prostitution, 167–68, 244n. 48, 50
- Provincial Bank, 105
- Przeworski, Adam, 7
- Quintana, Juan B., 49
- Quiroga, Facundo, 65, 74
- racism, Generation of 1837, 17, 19, 20, 214n.
3, 215n. 16
- Radicals, factions of, 104. *See also* Dissidents;
Elizaldistas; Nationalist Radicals; Núcleo
(UCR-CN); Opposition Radicals; Unified
Radicals; Unión Cívica Radical (UCR);
Yrigoyenistas
- railroad workers' strikes, 1, 121–22, 236nn.
7, 8
- Ramos Mejía, José María, 24
- La Reacción*, 167
- Reacción Gremial, 189
- La Rebelión*, 78, 109
- Refinería neighborhood: cinema, 159, 160;
marginalization of, 46, 158, 221n. 15;
party committees in, 58, 63
- Reflejos*, 164
- reformers. *See* elite reformers, early twentieth
century
- Repetto, Agustín, 59
- republicanism, 8
- la república posible*, 18
- Residence Law, 47
- retailers, in politics, 57, 58. *See also* Bolsa de
Comercio
- Roca, Julio A., 22, 23
- Rock, David, 5
- Rodríguez, Jorge Raúl, 56–57, 104, 187
- Rojas, Ricardo, 24, 66, 216n. 25
- Romero, Luis Alberto, 203
- Rosarino Brothers, 73
- Rosarino Local Workers Federation (FOLR),
47–48, 84, 86, 88–89, 116–17
- Rosario: aristocratic ancestry, lack of, 11, 34,
45, 47; bourgeois character of, 34; Buenos
Aires, comparison with, 137–38, 202–3,
249n. 12; during economic growth, 44;
elites of, 11, 53–54, 69–70; immigrant
population, 11, 44, 219n. 3; labor conflict
more frequent in, 192, 202; labor unions,
number of, 48; municipal government,
party control of, 53–54; and the national
identity problem, 31–32; neighborhood
political party committees, 57–60; neigh-
borhoods and electoral districts, map of,
42; neighborhood settlement patterns,
45–47, 158, 242n. 11; uniqueness of, 11;
and virile *civismo*, 35–36. *See also* city
council; mayor, office of; police chief,
office of; working class, Rosario
- Rosas, Juan Manuel de, 16, 65
- Rouillón, Alfredo, 151, 153, 241n. 119
- Ruiz, Eduardo, 88
- Sábado, Hilda, 204–5
- Sáenz Peña, Roque, 23, 25, 26–27, 29
- Sáenz Peña Law: the incomplete list, 27–28,
217n. 42; and the national identity problem,
25–27; passage and provisions of, 1, 23, 27.
See also suffrage; voters, Argentine
- Sánchez, Toribio, 80, 236n. 21
- sanitation workers' strike, 1913, 81–84, 86–87,
229nn. 79, 81–82
- Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino, 215n. 13; edu-
cation, advocacy of, 19–20; evolutionary
logic, 29, 40; land distribution, advocacy
of, 20, 215n. 18; and nonpluralist demo-
cracy, 15, 21; as president, 22; racism of,
20, 215n. 16
- “Seguí mi consejo” (tango), 161
- Semana Trágica*, 137
- Smith, Peter, 206–7
- Socialist Party: in Buenos Aires, 202; in
the city council, 223n. 43; on class
consciousness, 40–41; insignificance of,
in Rosario, 11; labor organization efforts,
47, 221n. 19; 1912 election, 23, 63, 69, 77,
226n. 22; 1913 tramway workers' strike,
85–86, 89, 231n. 120; 1916 election, 109,
233n. 57, 234n. 71; 1918 election, 125;
1920 election, 135; 1928 election, 189
- Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*
(Moore), 7
- Sociedad Rural, 51, 190
- Society of Tramway Employees, 84
- Sprague, John, 7

- SPTL (Society to Protect Free Labor), 115–17
 strikes of 1913, 78–89; anarchists' reaction to, 78–79; Caballero's support of, 78; general strike, 84, 87–88; labor movement weakened by, 90; military occupation, 88; as political protest, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86–87, 88–89; popular independent committee, 83–84, 85, 229n. 88, 230n. 102; sanitation workers, 81–84, 86–87, 229nn. 79, 81–82; tramway workers, 84–89; violence of, 85, 230n. 96. *See also* labor conflict
- suffrage: Alberdi's limits on, 16, 18–19; caudillismo, effect on, 110–11, 234n. 64; clientelism, persistence of, 90–91, 109–11, 231n. 1, 234n. 59; electoral fraud, late-nineteenth-century, 22, 23, 204–5; elites' disillusionment with, 126–27, 237n. 30; evolution, failure of, 204–5; for immigrants, 1, 5; municipal electoral reform, 96–98, 105, 188, 232n. 26, 247n. 121; 1912 reform (*see* Sáenz Peña Law); 1916 party platforms, 105, 106; restrictions on, 1912–1928, 53–54, 79, 223n. 42; universal male, established, 204; as virile *civismo*, 35. *See also* non-pluralist democracy; voters, Argentine
- syndicalists, 159, 185, 190, 221n. 20
- syndicalist union federation, 153–54, 241n. 120, 246n. 99
- “El taita caballerito” (tango), 76
- Talleres neighborhood, 46, 58, 158, 159, 160
- tango lyrics, 160–63
- Thedy, Enrique, 38, 88, 232n. 26
- Tocqueville, Alexis de, 8, 17, 18–19
- Tragic Week, 137
- tramway workers' strikes, 80–81, 84–89
- tyranny of the majority, 31. *See also* non-pluralist democracy
- UCR-CN. *See* Núcleo (UCR-CN)
- Ugarte, Marcelino, 105
- unemployment, 1914, 98–99
- Unified Radicals, 104, 176, 177, 178, 186
- Unión Cívica, 22
- Unión Cívica Radical-Comité Nacional (UCR-CN). *See* Núcleo (UCR-CN)
- Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), 104; alliances with merchants, 57; breakup of, 173–74; city councilmen, 57, 223n. 44; elites' power monopoly in, 50, 52, 59–61, 224nn. 67–69; emergence of, 22; factions within, 103–4, 104; intellect and virile *civismo*, linkage of, 36; labor reform, Greca's, 92–96; on national identity, 26; 1912 election, 30, 63–64; 1913 strikes, 87–88; 1914 election, 103, 113; nonelites in, 57–58, 59–60; nonpluralist democracy, belief in, 26, 30–31; origin of, 22; platform, 22, 63, 96, 105–6; political committee members, 57–58, 59–60; schism, 1914, 95; working class, appeal to, 5–6, 79. *See also* partisanship
- Unión Dependientes de Comercio, 64
- Unión Ferroviaria, 121
- Unión Sindical Argentina (USA), 153–54, 246n. 99
- Universidad del Litoral, 56
- upward mobility, 50–61; of academic professionals, 54–56; economic elite/political elite, correlation, 50–51; and elite dominance of parties, 59–61; limits on, in Rosario, 50; national trends, 50; of nonelite minority, 54–59; and social club status, 51, 51–54; through political committees, 57–58
- USA (Unión Sindical Argentina), 153–54, 246n. 99
- La Vanguardia*, 77, 87
- virility. *See* masculinity
- voters, Argentine: apathy, mid-1920s, 156–57; civic education of, 39–41; clientelism, persistence of, 90–91, 231n. 1; education of, Alberdi and Sarmiento on, 16, 18–19, 20, 40; pessimistic view of, 126–27, 130, 237nn. 27, 30; predisposition to *caudillismo*, 17, 19, 215n. 20; turnout, 1, 53–54, 79, 110, 156, 179, 189, 211n. 2, 223n. 42, 228n. 66. *See also* evolutionary logic; suffrage
- wheat production, 44
- Workers' Circles, 25
- working class, Rosario: advancement opportunities, 1920s, 157–58, 242n. 11; anarchism, lack of commitment to, 47–48, 152; and Caballero, appeal of, 64, 75; failure to appeal to, 3, 41, 63–64, 100; Greca's homage to, 34; immigrant origins of, 44, 45, 219n. 3; immorality, perceived, 167–68, 244nn. 45–46, 48; Infante's support for, 79–81; occupations of, 44; opportunism of, 152, 199, 203; Patriotic League's view of, 140–41; solidarity of, 45; uniqueness of, 11. *See also* anarchist union movement; immigrants and immigration; labor conflict; labor law reform; working class, Rosario; and *specific unions*

working-class identity: diffused, in
Argentina, 10; evolution of, 199–200;
legitimacy established, 48–49, 164–65; as
nonpolitical, 140–41, 165, 166–67; as
obstacle to nonpluralist democracy, 205;
party constructions of, 78–79; and
Peronism, 199–200; in popular culture,
159–63. *See also* Caballero, Ricardo;
national identity

Yrigoyen, Hipólito: and Buenos Aires
workers, 202; democratic vision, 26,
217n. 38; as early UCR leader, 22, 26;
1916 election, 114, 235n. 75; 1917 strikes,
121, 122; 1928–1929 strikes, 190–91, 192;
working class, appeal to, 5, 202

Yrigoyenistas, 104; alliances, 175–76, 245n.
85; and Caballero, 175–76, 179, 186, 194;
emergence of, 173–74; and military coup,
1930, 196–97; 1926 election, 170, 176–77,
178; 1928 election, 179–80; Radicals,
attempts to reunify, 193

Zimmerman, Eduardo, 55

Zubía, Hipólito, 58, 87

Workers or Citizens

MATTHEW KARUSH

This book develops a new interpretation of Argentina's first experiment with electoral democracy through an examination of party politics and identity formation in the important city of Rosario. Drawing on a wide range of sources—including the mainstream and anarchist press, political speeches, popular literature, and tango lyrics—*Workers or Citizens* reconstructs the history of this period as a struggle over national identity, citizenship, and political representation.

Confronting a newly expanded electorate, most of Rosario's politicians saw democracy not as a means to extend political representation to subordinate social groups, but as a nation-building tool aimed at transforming class-conscious workers into classless citizens. These politicians sought to preserve their own hegemony by banishing appeals to class interests from the political marketplace. Challenging this orthodoxy, one faction of the local Radical party achieved electoral success through an explicitly class-based nationalism that linked workers' contemporary struggles to those of the manly gauchos who once roamed the Argentine Pampas.

In the voting booth and on the picket line, workers selectively inhabited and manipulated the various identities made available by politicians and popular culture, as well as by the anarchists who dominated the local labor movement. Workers' persistent attempts to reconcile class identity and citizenship frustrated the nation-building project of elite politicians.

By charting this conflict, *Workers or Citizens* provides the first detailed political history of Rosario, Argentina's second largest city at the time, while offering a new perspective on both the collapse of Argentine democracy in 1930 and the rise of Peronism in 1945.

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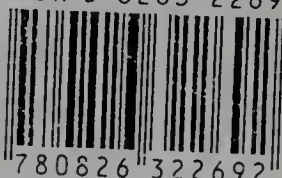
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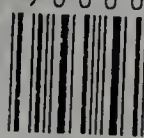
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